

Undertaking *hifth* at a Qur'anic school for girls in Cape Town: a case study

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

This small-scale case study focuses on the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifth* (the memorisation of the Qur'an) as it is practised at a Qur'anic school in Cape Town. The research aims to identify the language and literacy practices of *hifth* at this school, as well as investigate how selected girls orient themselves to these practices. The fieldwork was undertaken over two school terms at the girls' campus of a Qur'anic school in the city. It focused on three senior students undertaking *hifth* at this school, each of whom was in a different class and at a different stage of her *hifth*. Individual and group interviews were conducted with these students. The data set included field notes taken during classroom observations, transcripts of interviews with the participants, and physical artefacts, including one participant's copy of the Qur'an.

The theoretical framework for this research is drawn from New Literacy Studies (NLS) (cf. Heath, 1983; Street, 1984), communities of practice (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and a poststructuralist approach to literacy and identity (cf. Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Using these lenses enabled me to identify the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifth* at this school, as well as describe and interpret participants' identifications and investments in their literacy practices.

Following Brandt and Clinton (2002), local Qur'anic literacy practices are located in the broader context of global practices. I have theorised how literacy artefacts, such as the written Qur'an, connect this local school community and its literacy practices to other places across the country and the world, and to Qur'anic literacy practices there.

I found that the girls were actively involved in a range of *hifth* related literacy practices both at school and at home. Through their participation in these practices, they were learning to take an appropriate embodied orientation in their engagement with the Qur'an as readers, reciters and listeners. Each of them described the cognitive effort that was required to accurately memorise the Qur'an, while retaining recall of an increasingly longer part of the text. Their accounts contrast sharply with assumptions about memorisation or "rote" learning as "mindless" or undemanding and mechanical, rather than cognitively challenging and taxing.

The girls were deeply invested in their language and literacy practices at this school. Although all three of them expressed a sometimes ambivalent desire to complete *hifth*, all identified themselves and each other as successful *hifth* students becoming *haafithaat* (the esteemed title used to refer to girls or women who have memorised the whole Qur'an).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research focus

Within the Muslim community in Cape Town, there is a perception that the practice of the memorisation of the Qur'an or *hifth* is growing and that an increasing number of girls are undertaking *hifth* in Cape Town¹.

Literacy scholars have held a longstanding interest in Qur'anic literacy and Qur'anic school-based literacy practices and orientations. This research includes Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole's (1981) investigation of the acquisition and uses of Qur'anic literacy of the Vai in Liberia during the 1970s, Brian Street's (1984) study of the range of practices constituting Qur'anic or *maktab* literacy in a village in Iran during the same decade, and Daniel A. Wagner's (1983 & 1993) studies of Qur'anic schooling in Morocco in the 1970s and '80s. More recent research includes Helen N. Boyle's (2006), Leslie C. Moore's (2006, 2008 & 2011) and Andrey Rosowsky's (2001 & 2013) studies.

My own research focus is on the literacy practices encountered at a Qur'anic school for girls in Cape Town, as localised and connected to global practice. Following literacy theorists Deborah Brandt and Katie Clinton (2002), I am locating local literacy practices in distant literate designs. Literacy practices are sustained by powerful and consolidating objects and technologies (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 338). Qur'anic literacy practices are sustained by technologies such as those involved in printing and distributing the Qur'an as written text, and in the sponsoring of Qur'anic literacy practices both locally and globally.

This research investigates the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifth* as it is practised at a Qur'anic school for girls in Cape Town. The research is guided by the following questions: What are the literacy practices that constitute *hifth* at this school? How do selected girls orient themselves to these practices?

The research site school

Historically, *hifth* classes were offered at some of the *madrasahs* [schools offering after-school religious classes]² in Cape Town. Only boys attended Qur'anic institutions in Cape Town and

¹ Personal communication of Prof. A. Tayob, as well as the manager and past principal of the girls' school

² Definitions are included in a glossary of terms in Appendix 1.

these boys withdrew from mainstream schooling in order to complete *hifth* (*Muslim Views*, 1973: 3).

When he was 16 years old, the school's founder, a respected local *sheikh* or religious scholar, had undertaken Qur'anic studies in *Makkah* [Mecca]. There he himself had successfully completed *hifth* two years later. As a *hafith* or "guardian", the title used to refer to a man or boy who has memorised the entire Qur'an, he had recited at the *Masjid Al-Haram* ["The Holy Mosque"] in *Makkah*. He later reflected that this public recitation "broke me in and did away with the stage fright" (<http://www.quranunion.co.za>).

The school was founded in 1973 as a "*hafith* school" for boys. Classes were held at a mosque and were later offered for girls at another local mosque. In 2001, the boys' school (and hostel) was opened at its current location. The girls' school was opened in 2006 and at its current location in 2008. The girls' school had an enrolment of 89 students in 2010, 110 in 2011 and 120 in 2012.

Most students live in the area (the Cape Flats), but students from across Cape Town and the Western Cape attend the school. In 2012, parents paid school fees of R770 a month. The school is further funded by a foundation consisting of members from across South Africa. Members of the broader Muslim community are also encouraged to sponsor students.

The school is officially English medium and the core curriculum is *hifth*. Islamic studies are offered on four days a week and the school also offers national curriculum English, Maths and Life Skills. These "secular" subjects are optional and are only offered on Saturdays. The school manager encourages parents to enrol their daughters in these classes. All three of the participants in this study were enrolled. However, less than a quarter of all students were enrolled in this limited "secular" curriculum in 2012.

Qur'anic school-based literacy practices

The girls at this school are undertaking the task of memorising the whole of the Arabic Qur'an thus attaining the esteemed title used to refer to girls or women who have memorised the Qur'an, *haafithaat*. Undertaking *hifth* at this school requires most students to withdraw from mainstream schooling for a period of four to five years, or more, in order to complete the memorisation of the whole Qur'an.

The practice of Qur'anic memorisation and recitation is in accordance with the *sunna* [the practice of Prophet Muhammad]. The vision of the school's founder was that of "starting his own school where students would be taught the proper and correct recitation of the Glorious Qur'an, thereby following the *Sunnah* of our Noble Prophet (s)" (school's website). As a *hifth* teacher, he was reported to have been respected for his "exacting standards" and "strict discipline" (school's website).

The Qur'an is believed to be the actual words of God or Allah, revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad. As such, the text is considered immutable and inimitable, and must be transmitted in the exact form in which it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Moore, 2006; Boyle, 2006; Holes, 2004). The language of the Qur'an, Classical Arabic, is described as *fusha* or the purest and most eloquent Arabic (Holes, 2004: 5). The acquisition of Qur'anic knowledge is considered to be a transformative process (after Brenner, 2001, Moore, 2006: 120).

Qur'anic school-based practices, including Qur'anic memorisation, are modelled on the educational practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (Boyle, 2006: 484). Qur'anic memorisation constitutes the first phase of Qur'anic study (cf. Boyle, 2006; Moore, 2006). In traditional Islamic education, the Qur'an is conceptualised as having many layers of meaning (Moore, 2006: 120). Students demonstrate their understanding of the first layer of meaning by accurately and fluently reciting the sounds of the Qur'an (ibid.: 113). Only students who have successfully completed the memorisation and recitation of the whole Qur'an may progress to subsequent layers of explanation and commentary (ibid.). These students "know the Qur'an" or are able to recite the text, while not being knowledgeable in the Western sense of being able to understand and explain it (after Eickelman, 1985, Boyle, 2006: 487). Moreover, for many Muslims "learning the Qur'an" is synonymous with the memorisation of the Qur'an (Boyle, 2006: 487).

All of the students at this school are encouraged to take their Qur'anic studies further at a religious higher education institution. However, *hifth* is not only the first phase of Qur'anic learning; it is itself a lifelong commitment (cf. Gent, 2011). Students are expected not only to increase their Qur'anic knowledge, but also to retain their recall of the text.

Muslim schools in Cape Town

The school is registered as a non-profit organisation's "educational project" (Field notes, 30/03/12). The school's manager, however, indicated that there is an intention to register the

school as an independent school in the future. (The preschool is already registered as an independent school).

Recent empirical studies of Muslim schools in Cape Town, such as Aslam Fataar's (2005) and Abdulkader Tayob's (2011) research, have identified the increasing number of Islamic independent schools in Cape Town with a broad trend away from public schooling towards private schooling. This trend is both local and global (Fataar, 2005: 29-30). The increasing number of independent schools in South Africa is further identified with an increasing demand for "quality and alternative schooling" in this country (ibid.). These independent schools include "community-specific" (Fataar, 2005: 29) or "culture-specific" (Tayob, 2011: 43) schools, such as Muslim community schools. These schools have a religious identity and attempt to address students' religious needs at school (ibid.). They were established largely in response to the perceived "moral deterioration" (Tayob, 2011: 50) or "moral decay" (Fataar, 2005: 31) at public schools in Cape Town and more broadly across South African society. The morality of Muslim students, especially girls, and their mothers became the focus of efforts to address this "immorality" (Tayob, 2011: 51). Consequently, the "good" behaviour and dress of girls and women, especially the wearing of a "scarf", came to represent their morality and, by extension, that of the school (ibid.).

Following a survey (2006) of Islamic independent schools, Tayob suggests that there may be a greater number of girls than boys at these schools (Tayob, 2011: 43).

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research focus on the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifh* at a girls' Qur'anic school in Cape Town. In the following chapter, I present selected concepts from the three theoretical orientations that inform my analysis: literacy as social practice, communities of practice and a poststructuralist conceptualisation of identity.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review

Introduction

In this chapter, I present New Literacy Studies (NLS), communities of practice and a poststructuralist approach to literacy and identity as the theoretical foundations of my research, as well as review research related to these fields of study.

Literacy as social practice

Following research in New Literacy Studies (NLS), I am approaching literacy not as a set of skills to be measured, but as a set of social practices that varies within and across social contexts (Street, 2010a: 28). Furthermore, I will be engaging with some of the questions and tensions which literacy theorists have identified around the concepts of *literacy events* and *literacy practices*. Literacy, following an NLS approach, is viewed as variable in its form, function and value, and thus varying in its social meanings and effects (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010: 2). Literacy and its uses are not defined in a vacuum as reading and writing are always and already embedded in particular forms of activity in the context of the social (cultural, historical, political and economic) practices of which they are a part and which take place in particular social spaces (ibid.).

Literacy theorist Mike Baynham (2004) identifies Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole's *Psychology of Literacy* (1981), Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words* (1983) and Brian Street's *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1984) as the *first-generation* literacy studies. These early studies approached literacy as the local social practices of particular social groups (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010: 1). *Second-generation* studies, including those by Don Kulick and Christopher Stroud (1993) on the conceptions and uses of literacy in a village in Papua New Guinea, Mastin Prinsloo and Mignonne Breier (1996) on the uses of literacy at the time of political transition in South Africa, and David Barton and Mary Hamilton (1998) on the literacy practices of a particular community in the north of England, developed this approach in local empirical research, while current *third-generation* empirical studies point to further shifts in focus in NLS: from the local to the translocal, from print-based to electronic and multimedia literacies, and from the verbal to the multimodal (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010: 1-2).

In her foundational study, Heath (1983) compared the potentially contrasting home and school literacy practices of middle class families with those of black and white working class

communities in the southern United States after school desegregation in the late 1960s. Heath identified *literacy events* as a key concept for the empirical study of literacy which she described as “the occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies” (Heath, 1982: 50). Street later described literacy events as activities in which literacy has a role and which are made up of key elements, including participants, settings, artefacts and activities (after Swann *et al.*, 2004, 2010b: 206). Literacy practices, he suggested, refer both to a set of observable single literacy events and, at a more abstract level, to the meanings and values associated with literacy within particular social and cultural contexts (Street, 2010b: 206).

Street’s (1984) study of the range of literacy practices that developed in north-eastern Iran in the 1970s focused on the interactions of a village in the mountains with the central city and the villages of the plains, as well as their different responses to the oil boom of the mid-1970s. He describes the literacy taught in the local Islamic school as *maktab* literacy (Street, 1984: 130). Taking an “ideological” approach to *maktab* literacy practices, Street draws attention to the specific contexts which give meaning to literacy for those learning and using it, and to the particular uses of such literacy, and the concepts associated with it, for different groups of people (ibid.: 134). Street identifies a range of Islamic beliefs and practices across the country and within the village, rejecting both the concepts of Islam as single and monolithic, and of a single, “autonomous” and “restricted” literacy with which it is often associated (135). Instead, Street identifies how both oral and written religious texts may be selected according to a particular teacher’s own interests and purposes (136). Street contends that *maktab* or Qur’anic literacy involves a “mix” of oral and literate modes of communication (133). This “mix”, however, not only comprises oral (reciting the text) and literate (decoding the text) practices; it is multimodal as it is embodied practice.

Local and global contexts of literacy practices

Literacy scholars are increasingly aware that the focus on literacy practices as located in immediate social contexts has to be modified with a sense of how the literacy practices of remote sites might shape and constrain local literacy practices (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010: 4). This awareness has resulted in a re-examination of the concept of *practice* in recent literacy research. Practice, at one end of the scale, can be defined as actions which are observable in the interactional here-and-now, but, at the other end of the scale, for social theorists like Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991) and Michel Foucault (1977) practices are the larger, sustained operations

of institutions and ideologies over time (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010: 6). Thus, the term *practices* can be used in two ways: firstly, to refer to the specific ethnographic detail of situated literacy events, and, secondly, to refer to culturally recognisable patterns of behaviour which can be generalised from observation and which include textual practices (the culturally recognisable patterns for the construction of written texts) (ibid.). Theorists addressing problems of scale in transcontextual literacy research, such as Jan Blommaert (2005 & 2010), retain the focus on literacy activities and events, while including larger scale phenomena, such as institutional, national and transnational processes, in the analysis (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2010: 15).

In their critique of the NLS theoretical framework, Brandt and Clinton (2002) argue that local and global contexts are not separate, but interconnected. Local contexts do not wholly determine how literacy is conceptualised and used locally. Thus, they argue that literacy practices cannot be explained by only locating them in the local context in which literacy events take place. Instead, they suggest that literacy practices can include transcontextualizing capacities that enable these practices to endure across a range of social and historical contexts (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 338). They draw attention to the localizing and globalizing aspects of local literacy practices (ibid.: 347). These terms describe actions that can be taken by both human and non-human agents. The concept of *localizing moves* describes how local individuals and social groups shape literacy practices according to their own needs and social structures, while the concept of *globalizing connects* describes the broader implications and uses of a local literacy practice beyond the local context (Reder & Davila, 2005: 173). Local uses of literacy can serve multiple local and global interests, and local literacy events can play a role in distant literacy events and larger scale processes (ibid.: 174). A range of technologies, devices and durable literacy artefacts often accomplish these globalizing actions.

Brandt and Clinton theorise the social roles played by objects in literacy activities, including the framing and mediating of social interactions, and the aggregating of literacy events in order to relocate them for use in other contexts (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 344). Drawing on the work of sociologist Bruno Latour (1993, 1996), literacy objects or artefacts are theorised as social actors which give meaning to the local contexts in which they appear and connect the local context and its literacy practices with other locations and practices there (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 348). Thus, the artefacts involved in a literacy event are considered social actors in the social interactions of that event, and both human and non-human agents in a literacy event actively mediate local literacy practices (346).

Brandt and Clinton also use the concept of *literacy sponsors* to draw attention to interested local or distant social agents who shape local literacy practices (Brandt & Clinton, 2002: 349). These agents can be institutions, policies or people who often provide and control access to written materials, such as textbooks, and thereby exercise power over the acquisition and practice of literacy (Reder & Davila, 174). Thus, literacy artefacts in the local context serve as substitutes for the interests of absent and more powerful others in remote contexts (350). The relationship between sponsor and sponsored is described as a mutual, albeit unequal, dependency (ibid.).

Drawing on the framework of literacy as social practice, Moore's (2011) research on the participation in both Qur'anic and public schooling of Muslim children ("double schooling") in the immigrant Somali community in Ohio in the US points to an increased awareness of the possible interconnectedness of literacy practices in immediate and remote contexts. The civil war in Somalia and the resulting Diaspora disrupted the Qur'anic (and public) schooling of many Somalis. However, this immigrant community has sustained, and transformed, its Qur'anic schooling tradition in the US (Moore, 2011: 292). Moore identifies curricular shifts occurring both in the Diaspora and in Somalia where some Qur'anic schools now offer a broader curriculum, including instruction in reading or decoding and writing, and suggests that the flow of innovation is bi-directional (293). Similarly, in her earlier study (2008) in a Fulbe community in northern Cameroon, Moore connected changes in Islamic educational practice to the movement of people across schooling traditions and geographical space (Moore, 2011: 290-1). She noted that Qur'anic school teachers who had participated in both public and Qur'anic schooling had introduced a number of public school-like practices to the Qur'anic schools where they taught (291). Furthermore, men who had pursued advanced studies in the Arab states returned to establish Islamic primary schools which offered both religious and non-religious subjects, including Arabic (ibid.).

The notion of literacy as social practice informs the conceptualisation of and analysis in this study.

Communities of Practice

Social anthropologist Jean Lave and social learning theorist Etienne Wenger developed the concept of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to describe community members' *mutual engagement* in a *joint enterprise* and the development of a *shared*

repertoire of linguistic, social and cultural resources through this engagement (Barton & Tusting, 2005: 2; Lave & Wenger, 1991). These resources include shared ways of talking and acting, and are social markers of group identity.

Situated approaches to learning focus on community members' participation in the activities of the community as fundamental to learning (Barton & Tusting, 2005: 2). Moreover, situated learning theorists focus on "the transformative possibilities of being and becoming" full participants in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 32).

Lave and Wenger's (1991) work analyses community members' participation in "the lived-in world" (35). Learning is examined as situated activity and conceptualised as beginning with *legitimate peripheral participation* in a community of practice (29). *Legitimate peripheral participation* describes the changing relations among participants engaged in specific sociocultural practices. The concept draws attention to the process in which learners or "newcomers" (29) become part of a community of practice by moving from partial toward full participation (ibid.). Thus, learning involves learners' increasing participation in the activities of a community of practice (49). Learners acquire the knowledge and skills required of "old-timers" (29) or adept practitioners through this increasing participation in the community.

Although Lave and Wenger refer to learners' "centripetal participation" (36), they emphasise that there is no single (physical, political or metaphorical) centre nor a place designated as "the periphery" in a community of practice (36). They address the "peripherality" integral to the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation*:

Peripherality suggests that there are multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and - inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. *Changing* locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 35-6).

The position of "legitimate peripherality" can be an empowering or a disempowering position (36). Peripherality is an empowering position when a participant is able to progress toward full participation (ibid.). Newcomers' "legitimate peripherality" provides access to resources for learning through increasing participation in the community (37). However, it is a disempowering position when a participant is kept from participating in the full range of activities in the community and hence to possibilities for learning by powerful actors in the broader social context (36).

Legitimate peripheral participants construct shared experiences in conversation among peers and thereby gradually construct their identities as participants in the community (108). Thus, Lave and Wenger identify “learning to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation” (109). This talk shifts and focuses participants’ attention, co-ordinates their engagement and signals their membership (ibid.).

In their (1991) work, Lave and Wenger do not explore questions of schooling and school learning. However, they suggest rethinking schooling in terms of legitimate peripheral participation in order to consider questions around the place of schooling, including the school community, school practices and school knowledge, in the broader community and the social organisation of schools into communities of practice (41).

Barton and Hamilton (2005) trace the development of the fields of situated literacies and situated learning to Scribner and Cole’s (1981) work (Barton & Hamilton, 2005: 14). They suggest that, although the former focuses on literacy practices and the latter on social processes, both fields share a focus on social interactions, most of which are textually mediated (ibid.). They develop Wenger’s (1998) notion of *reification* (Wenger, 1998: 58). Wenger defines reification as both a process in every practice and a product (ibid: 59-60). Reification is:

the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’. In so doing, we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized (Wenger, 1998: 58).

Reifications occur when “aspects of human experience and practice are congealed into fixed forms and given the status of object” (59). He contends that reification shapes participants’ experiences (ibid.). Dress codes are included as reifications (27). Almost all of the examples of reification in Wenger’s (1998) work are identified as a range of literacy artefacts by Barton and Hamilton (Barton & Hamilton, 2005: 15). They contend that the materiality of literacy artefacts, including texts, as well as their availability and expense, contributes to their possibilities and affordances (23). Reifications are described as “stable and portable entities which cross contexts” (26).

Wenger characterises reifications by their succinctness, their portability, their durability and their focusing effect (Wenger, 1998: 61). Barton and Hamilton argue that written texts are powerful in all of these dimensions (Barton & Hamilton, 2005: 28). I will use this notion to explore the ways in which the Qur’an, as both written and recited text, is a powerful reification

in the local context of this Qur'anic school and in the social and educational project of the transformation of students there.

Taking a critical stance on communities of practice, Barton and Hamilton point out that much social interaction in a diverse range of social contexts does not resemble "the prototypical community of practice" (25). Social configurations may consist of "interconnected but dispersed networks" (ibid.). Group members may not share common goals and interests (cf. Wenger, 1998: 77). Members' engagement may be ambivalent and the community may be coercive. However, these features may not be necessarily marginalising; instead, they may indicate social change and challenge. Individual participants in a community of practice are also members of multiple other social groups. These social configurations are dynamic and overlapping, and may conflict with or complement each other.

Literacy and identity

In this study, identity is conceptualised as a sociocultural construct and, drawing on poststructuralist theories, as dynamic, multiple and a site of struggle (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 192). By foregrounding identity, I hope to locate participants in the particular historical, social and cultural context in which their learning takes place and explore how they negotiate, and might resist, the diverse subject positions this context offers them (ibid.). The girls at this school are socialized into a particular Muslim identity through their participation in the apprenticeship process of *hifth*. Before they began undertaking *hifth*, however, they were already in the process of constructing identities which were complex and marked by difference on grounds such as age, race, class and gender. I will explore how participants want to construct their multiple identities and what possible identities the girls are able to construct.

Poststructuralist theories of language, particularly those of philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1963/1984) and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1997), foreground struggles over meaning and legitimacy in social practices in which relationships are defined, negotiated and resisted through language (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 193). Following Bakhtin, language is investigated as situated utterances in which speakers and listeners jointly struggle to construct meanings in interaction with each other in a range of contexts (ibid.). Bakhtin (1981) focuses on how speakers learn to construct their own voices by taking utterances from "other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions" (Bakhtin, 1981: 294). Thus, speakers "try on" other people's utterances by appropriating and adapting these utterances to

their own intentions, and gradually making these utterances serve their own needs and communicate their own meanings (Norton & Toohey, 2001: 311).

In this view, language is not neutral but expresses particular predispositions and value systems (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 193). Bourdieu theorises discourse as “a symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is offered” (Bourdieu, 1997: 651). Individuals are dynamically positioned within a symbolic and linguistic “market” which is constituted of social fields. They are positioned according to the value which their linguistic competence or *cultural capital* receives on the particular “market” in which it is offered (ibid.). Bourdieu foregrounds power relations in language use which has important implications for how language learners are positioned by others, for the opportunities they get to speak, and for the varieties of language that are taught and learners use (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 193). I will be investigating how the girls at this school define a “good” or successful language and literacy learner in *hifh*.

Feminist poststructuralist theorists, such as Christine Weedon (1987/1997), foreground the central role of language in social organisation and meaning-making. Weedon argues that the individual or “subject” constructs a sense of self or “subjectivity” in language thus, drawing on Michel Foucault’s notions of discourse and historical specificity, subjectivity is socially and discursively produced (Weedon, 1987: 21, 107). Unlike the humanist conception of the individual in Western philosophy which assumes an innate and unique, fixed and coherent, and rational subject, the poststructuralist subject, on the other hand, is theorised as diverse, contradictory and changing (ibid.). The subject is actively involved in the ongoing process of identity construction by drawing on competing discourses. In this identity work, the subject may also be differentially invested in a range of subject positions in specific contexts and social relations (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 194).

Bonny Norton’s (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) concept of *investment* integrates poststructuralist conceptions of identity and human agency in relation to learning (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 194). In the field of language and literacy learning, investment refers to “the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to language and literacy practices, and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn a language or participate in language and literacy learning” (ibid.). Investment draws on Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s (1977) notion of *cultural capital* which refers to cultural “habits and dispositions” or specific resources, including forms of knowledge and modes of thought, that characterize different

social classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms (Norton Peirce, 1995: 17). Cultural capital is acquired at home and at school through participation in a given set of social and cultural practices. Norton contends that language and literacy learners “invest” in social practices and expend effort on their learning in the hope and expectation that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital (ibid.). Learners’ investment in their learning is also an investment in their social identity (Norton Peirce, 1995: 18). Learners reassess their sense of themselves and their desires for the future as the value of their cultural capital increases (McKinney & Norton, 2008: 194).

In their studies of language and literacy learning and identity, Yasuko Kanno and Bonny Norton (2003), have made use of the concept of *imagined communities*. The term refers to “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible to each other, who are nevertheless connected imaginatively across space and time” (Kanno & Norton, 2003: 241). These communities include learners’ imagined future relationships, as well as their membership of transnational communities (242). Extending the concept of situated learning, Kanno and Norton examine how learners’ investment in imagined communities might affect their learning (ibid.). They suggest that the images learners construct of these imagined communities deeply affect their investment in language and literacy learning, and moreover that imagined communities might have a greater impact on learning and investment than learners’ everyday communities (242-3).

The girls’ desire to participate in both the religious and non-religious curriculum offered at this school is understood in the context of future affiliations and identifications, both with the imagined community of *huffaz* [Muslims who have successfully completed *hifh*] and with the upwardly mobile, English-speaking middle classes. Imagined communities have requirements for participation which stipulate what would-be-members have to accomplish to gain access to these communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003: 244). Would-be-members of the imagined community of *huffaz* are required to accomplish the memorisation of the entire Qur’an.

Learners’ affiliations with imagined communities expand the range of possible identities available to them and, moreover, the rapid development of global communication systems over the last three decades and the increase in mass migration have further expanded the scope of imaginable communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003: 246-7). However, these imaginative possibilities are nonetheless constrained by social ideologies and hegemonies (ibid: 247). This leads me to consider how the participants in my study construct the imagined communities with which they identify. The future trajectory envisioned for the students at this school is suggested

by the school's website which refers to the "historical achievements of the memorizers who have advanced to excel in many fields inspired by [the Qur'anic knowledge] they have imbibed". Social and economic constraints, however, might restrict these girls' capacity to realise imagined other selves and futures for themselves.

Literacy practices in Qur'anic schooling

In the following section, I discuss recent empirical research on Qur'anic school-based literacy and language practices in a range of local contexts. The discussion is focused on the use of three contentious terms in the literature: "reading", "understanding" and "rote" learning.

Orientations to school-based literacy practices: "Reading" and "understanding"

Taking a sociocultural approach to literacy learning, Peter Freebody (1992) outlines four "roles" of the successful literacy learner in modern schooling: that of code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst. Freebody argues that notions of successful literacy learning are always historical and socioculturally specific; thus these components are necessary but not sufficient for successful reading (Freebody, 1992: 93). He grounds his theoretical discussion in his experience of a specific culture's demands and expectations of its members' management of text (ibid.). Successful reading, Freebody further argues, involves learning to play these four related roles by developing and sustaining the resources associated with each.

Thus, the reader as "code-breaker" learns to engage with the written code or decode the written script of the text by recognising and understanding how spoken sounds relate to written symbols in the language (94). The reader as "text-participant" learns to construct the meaning (or possible meanings) of the text by drawing on a range of resources, including knowledge of the topic and generic structure of the text (95). Children begin learning this set of resources from their parents before they have learnt to decode and teachers of early literacy continue this teaching and learning (95-6). The reader as "text-user" learns through participation in literacy events the function of texts in a range of settings (97). The reader further learns how to interact with the text and what position to take up in interactions (98). In the classroom, the teacher displays to the students what counts as reading in the contemporary, local context (99). Finally, the reader as "text-analyst" learns to be consciously aware of how the text is constructed or written from a particular ideological position and how it constructs the reader (100).

These categories allow a more nuanced conceptualisation of reading in particular social contexts and a more detailed description of the social interactions between teachers and students in learning to read in the school context. I am taking up Freebody's categories in order to explore the specific reading activities involved in learning how to "read" the Qur'an in the local context of this Qur'anic school. I will be focusing on the relative roles and positions that individual readers are learning to take up through their social interactions around and engagement with the written text in the classroom.

Daniel A. Wagner and Abdelhamid Lotfi (1983) construct literacy learning as the development of "functional reading skills" (Wagner and Lotfi, 1983: 113). The decoding practised at Qur'anic schools is contrasted to the "skilled reading" learnt at "modernized" Qur'anic schools (or schools which offer both a religious and non-religious curriculum) (ibid.). "Fully literate" students are identified as those who can read and write with comprehension (116), while "partially literate" students can perform "simple decoding" of the Arabic alphabet and pronounce words and sentences (117). Furthermore, "real reading skills" are constructed as those reading skills which can be used outside of the religious classroom and beyond religious texts (118). Street, on the other hand, avoids defining specific forms of literacy as "restricted" or "full" (Street, 1984: 130). Instead, he identifies the range of activities involved in literacy practices in specific local contexts and investigates how literacy is taken up by groups and individuals according to their own interests and needs.

In recent research on how children learn to read the Qur'an at "mosque schools" or Muslim complementary schools in the UK, Rosowsky (2013) defines reading in terms of decoding and comprehension skills only. He identifies these children's reading as decoding of the Classical Arabic of the Qur'an (Rosowsky, 2001: 56). In this context, teachers and students understand successful reading as the fluent and accurate decoding aloud of the text in order to perform prayers and to participate in the recitation of the Qur'an (Rosowsky, 2013: 76). Thus, a successful reader at a "mosque school" in the UK is identified as a "code-breaker" or a reader who is able to decode the Arabic script and not a "text-participant" or a reader who is able to comprehend the meaning/s of the text (ibid.).

In earlier research, however, Rosowsky (2001) explores how members of a local Muslim community in the UK conceptualise "meaning" in the social context of their engagement with the written text of the Qur'an (Rosowsky, 2001: 56). Although the purpose of this reading is not to access the meaning/s of the text, participants consider the practice of reading or decoding in

this specific local context as a “meaningful” social and cultural practice (Rosowsky, 2001: 61). Participants locate meaning in Qur’anic reading activities not in comprehension of the text’s meaning/s, but in the “meaningfulness” or significance of the literacy practice to the participants themselves. Thus, Qur’anic school-based literacy practices are a form of decoding, as well as text-using.

Memorisation: “Rote” Learning

A number of literacy researchers have identified the extensive use of memorisation or “rote” learning, involving much imitation and repetition, in the teaching and learning of Qur’anic literacy (cf. Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984; Boyle, 2006; Moore, 2006). Wagner and Lotfi (1983) describe the recitation and memorisation involved at Qur’anic schools in Yemen as “monotonous” (Wagner & Lotfi, 1983: 113), while Street (1984) suggests that some participants in Qur’anic schooling in Iran are aware that memorisation “can be soporific and mindless” (Street, 1984: 143).

Boyle (2006) argues that neither Qur’anic literacy teaching nor learning is “mindless”. Qur’anic literacy teaching is not “mindless” or arbitrary; it is a purposeful pedagogical choice (Boyle, 2006: 485). Moreover, Qur’anic literacy learning is not “mindless” or irrational; instead, it is constructed as a demonstration of reasonable and disciplined behaviour (489). Boyle identifies the practice of memorising part of the Qur’an as an important part of the elementary religious education of children in most Muslim communities (Boyle quoted in Moore, 2008: 644). Historically, memorisation as a teaching and learning strategy was considered appropriate in the education of young children. Following Wagner (1983), Boyle quotes the Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali as saying:

The creed ought to be taught to a boy in the earliest childhood, so that he may hold it absolutely in memory. Thereafter, the meaning of it will keep gradually unfolding itself to him, point by point, as he grows older. So, first, is the committing to memory; then understanding; then belief and certainty and acceptance (Al-Ghazali quoted in Boyle, 2006: 488).

Thus, the memorisation of the Qur’an is constructed as the first step in learning and understanding, and thus the acquisition of the revealed knowledge of the Qur’an (Boyle, 2006: 488). Prior to this first step, however, children learn to orient to the recited Qur’an intuitively or emotively (cf. Martin, 2005; Boyle, 2006; Moore, 2006). Thus, children are taught to take up a

preferred affective orientation to the sounds of the recited Qur'an, that of deep and enduring appreciation, before comprehending the text (Moore, 2006: 121).

Drawing on data from Morocco, Yemen and Nigeria, Boyle contends that Qur'anic schools aim to develop students' spirituality and morality, as well as provide parents and students with an alternative to public schooling (Boyle, 2006: 480). Children's participation in Qur'anic schooling is linked to learning to live as a "good" Muslim and thus to participants' identities as Muslims by parents and teachers (487). A "good" Muslim learns to be disciplined through Qur'anic memorisation which involves cognitive and physical discipline (489). Boyle identifies participants' belief that the practice will benefit them both in the future and in "the hereafter" (494).

Like Boyle, Moore (2006, 2008 & 2011) challenges the perception of "rote" learning as "mindless" or not purposeful and meaningful to participants. Making use of language socialisation theory, Moore (2006 & 2008) reframes the practice of Qur'anic memorisation as social practice involving "guided repetition" in which children learn how to take the "correct" orientation in their engagement with the Qur'an. Moore argues that, through "guided repetition", Fulbe children in northern Cameroon learn both how to use the language of the Qur'an in socioculturally appropriate ways, as well as how to think, feel and behave as Fulbe and as Muslims (Moore, 2006: 111). Thus, children are socialised into recitation of the text in Arabic, as well as into the ways of doing, being and feeling associated with Qur'anic recitation (121).

Moore characterises the underlying ideology of Qur'anic memorisation and recitation as the formation of "correct" linguistic habits in order to achieve transformation or to develop "good" linguistic, intellectual and moral habits (Moore, 2006: 122). Moore quotes the Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun as identifying the Qur'an (and the traditions of the Prophet) as the "highest form of speech" and as having the power to positively affect those who have formed the "correct" habits of memorising and reciting this kind of speech (Ibn Khaldun quoted in Moore, 2006: 122). Thus, children achieve competence in Qur'anic literacy, as well as developing self-discipline and respect for and submission to Allah's words (Moore, 2011: 290).

Qur'anic school-based literacy practices are described as an apprenticeship in which novices are guided by experts in order to master the verbal and embodied rendering of the text (Moore, 2006: 117). Moore's (2008) study takes a multimodal approach to the Qur'anic literacy practices of the Fulbe in northern Cameroon. Making use of microanalysis of the turn-by-turn interaction

between teacher and student during lessons, she analyses how children learn to orient appropriately to the text and to their teacher through specific multimodal practices, including the body positioning of teacher and student, and the use of pointing and looking at the text (Moore, 2008: 645). Participants use multimodal practices to co-ordinate their attention and actions, as well as to accomplish the long-term goals of Qur'anic schooling in this specific context (658). These goals are identified as the acquisition of Qur'anic literacy skills, self-discipline, and respect for and submission to the Qur'an and Qur'anic teachers (ibid.).

Following Boyle (2006) and Moore (2008), I will be describing and analysing the memorisation of the Qur'an as an embodied learning process. Following Moore (2008), I will be focusing on how competence in Qur'anic literacy practice is defined and demonstrated in this school community, and how literacy practices are informed by community members' values, beliefs and identities.

Conclusion

In this theory chapter, I have presented a broad overview of the three theoretical orientations that inform my analysis: literacy as social practice, communities of practice and a poststructuralist approach to literacy and identity. I have also discussed how Qur'anic school-based language and literacy practices have been approached in recent empirical research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the general design of this research which took the form of a small-scale, qualitative case study. I go on to discuss how this informed my data collection strategies and approach to analysis, and give an overview of the data collected.

Research design

Aiming to investigate how and why girls undertook *hifth* in an institutional setting in Cape Town, I chose to embark on a small-scale case study located at the girls' campus of a Qur'anic school on the Cape Flats of Cape Town. I chose to focus on a small group of senior students at this school over the course of two school terms. Age was used as criteria for the selection of participants: I have purposively chosen to focus on adolescent girls undertaking *hifth*.

Colin Knobel and Michele Lankshear define a case study as the "intensive (in depth and detailed) study of a bounded, contemporary phenomenon" (Knobel & Lankshear, 1999: 95). Robert K. Yin adds that case studies take place within real-life contexts and rely on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009: 18). In this research, the bounded, contemporary phenomenon is that of the literacy practices and events involved in the apprenticeship process of *hifth* as practised at the school. The literacy practices are identified, and the literacy events which exemplify these practices are described and analysed. In so doing, I hoped to gain a detailed insight into how selected girls at this school orient themselves to these practices.

Data collection

I made use of three methods generating different kinds of evidence in collecting the data: direct observation, interviews and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009). The data that was gathered from these sources comprised:

Direct observation:

- field notes taken during classroom observations of *hifth* lessons (approximately 31 hours in total)
- video recordings of students' recitations during four *hifth* lessons (approximately 115 minutes in total)

Interviews:

- questionnaires for participants to complete in writing at home (see Appendix 9)
- audio recordings of three rounds of semi-structured individual interviews with the participants. Interviews ranged in length from 5 to 25 minutes (see Appendix 10 for questions asked)
- audio recordings of three semi-structured group interviews with the participants. Interviews were 20 to 25 minutes in length (see Appendix 11 for questions discussed)
- notes taken during two follow-up interviews with one participant for further explanation and discussion of selected artefacts

Physical artefacts:

- an information sheet for first year students and their parents
- pages from one participant's "Daily Progress Monitoring Book"
- pages in one participant's copy of the Qur'an

I visited the school in March 2012 and met with the manager of the girls' school. This meeting served to inform my research design and interview questions.

The school manager introduced the research project to members of the school community, including the school board, the principal, teachers and students. She was also integral to negotiating the consent of teachers to carry out the fieldwork.

Classroom observations took place over the course of five weeks from May to June 2012. These observations took place before participants were selected by the school manager. Thus, I was observing whole-class participation rather than focusing only on the participants in the study.

At the beginning of the third term, the school manager and the principal met with the five students who had been invited to participate in the research. One was excluded on the grounds of age and one withdrew from the study.

Although an "outsider" both to the school and the local Muslim community, I was able to draw on my background in teaching girls in the Middle East. This helped me in establishing trust and co-operation with the participants and their parents. However, my experience there also gave me some critical distance as the social and cultural context was quite different to that of this school community.

Each of the participants was in a different class and at a different stage in her *hifth*. Amina³ was at Level 4, Zainab was at Level 3 and Fatima was at Level 1 of the school's *hifth* curriculum. (Students at Level 1 would memorise the 30th and 29th *ajzaa* [parts into which the Qur'an is divided to facilitate recitation], as well as the 1st to 5th *ajzaa*. At Level 2, students would memorise the 6th to 15th *ajzaa*. Students would memorise the 16th to 25th *ajzaa* at Level 3 and the 26th to 28th *ajzaa* at Level 4.) By midyear 2012, Amina had memorised up to the 28th *juz* [part of the Qur'an], Zainab up to the 21st *juz* and Fatima up to the 3rd *juz* of the Qur'an.

Amina had begun *hifth* at the school in 2006. At seventeen, she was the oldest of the group and had been at the school the longest. She was in her seventh year of *hifth*. In 2012, Fatima had just begun *hifth* at the school. She was sixteen and in the senior first year class. Zainab had begun *hifth* at the school in 2008. At fourteen, Zainab was the youngest in the group; she was, however, already in her fifth year of *hifth*.

After participants and their parents had signed and returned their consent forms, participants completed their questionnaires.

Interviews were held over five weeks from July to August. The individual interviews were conducted during three sessions over three weeks. Thereafter, three group interviews were held over two weeks. All of these interviews were informal. They were audio recorded and transcribed. Observations during interviews were noted in field notes.

Both the individual and group interviews took place after midday so that participants had sufficient time to complete their daily *hifth* lessons. Nevertheless, I attempted to keep each of these interviews brief as I was aware that all of the participants may not have finished their work by midday. I was only able to conduct two individual interviews with Amina. Nevertheless, Amina contributed more than the other participants during both the individual and group interviews, so I will be focusing on Amina in Chapter 5.

Video recordings of students' recitations during four *hifth* periods were created in August 2012. I obtained permission from participants and teachers to video record in their classrooms. Teachers and students were generally more self-conscious during lessons which were video recorded as the presence of the video recorder was obtrusive. Although the data was influenced by this, participants' responses of increased self-consciousness and nervousness during these

³ Names of participants have been changed to protect their identities.

recitations seemed naturally occurring as both my presence and that of the video camera were those of audience members of a critically evaluated performance. Thus, the video data also served as evidence of participants' reported anxiety about having to recite in front of an audience.

Selected artefacts, namely Zainab's "Daily Progress Monitoring Book" and copy of the Qur'an, were gathered during further visits to the school after the initial fieldwork had been completed. These visits took place in April 2013. I had two interviews with Zainab for explanation and discussion of pages from these texts. I obtained permission to photograph Zainab's copy of the Qur'an and returned to do so in May 2013. As none of the participants were any longer in possession of the "Daily Progress Monitoring Books" which they had been using in the third term, I focused on work covered during the course of one week in the fourth term of 2012.

Data analysis

I have taken a broadly ethnographic, interpretive approach (Blommaert & Jie, 2010) to data analysis, and used the techniques of critical discourse analysis (Janks, 1997 & 2010) to analyse transcripts of individual and group interviews, as well as multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) to analyse field notes taken during classroom observations and interviews, and to analyse transcripts of video recordings of *hifth* lessons.

I began my analysis during observations of *hifth* lessons by describing classroom activities in detailed field notes. I identified how teachers and students named lessons and texts, and literacy activities. I used these activities to identify literacy events in the *hifth* classroom. Literacy events were used as a basic unit of analysis (Barton & Hamilton, 2005). These were identified as the student's recitation to herself, a peer, the teacher, and the principal. I chose to focus on the student's daily recitations to her teacher.

I considered the features of Qur'anic literacy practices from the literature review to identify similarities and differences to the literacy practices that constitute *hifth* at this school. A feature which recurred across the literature was the perception, particularly of parents, of Qur'anic literacy practice as disciplined practice. I identified this perception amongst participants in this study. In Chapter 4, I explore two aspects of this theme: the construction of *hifth* as a focus on the short- and long-term goals of *hifth*, and as a narrow focus on "correctly" reading and reciting a single text, the Qur'an.

I took a multimodal approach to the analysis of the classroom observation data. Gunther Kress's (2009) and Theo van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotic approach to the analysis of multimodal interactions and artefacts extends the interpretation of language and its meanings beyond the verbal to the whole range of modes of representation and communication used in a culture (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010). Thus, the speech and writing involved in the student's recitations to her teacher were examined as part of a range of modes of communication which practitioners were using. I focused on the embodied interactional patterns between teacher and student during these recitations, paying close attention to body positioning and movement, gaze and facial expression. I have illustrated my analysis with video stills from a video recording of one of Fatima's recitations to her teacher.

I continued my analysis by examining the data obtained from participants' questionnaires and transcripts of the individual and group interviews with participants. Transcripts were used to revisit the data a number of times for detailed analysis. I recorded instances when participants mentioned specific literacy events and practices or referred to texts used in *hifth*, some of which were at times present on the table around which interviews took place.

Following Shirin Zubair's (2007) study, I recorded participants' use of figurative language to construct their views on the practices of *hifth* schooling and the literacy practices involved. Boyle's (2006) research identifies the common use of figurative language, particularly by parents, to describe the embodiment of the text "in the heart or mind" by those who had memorised it. Participants used a range of metaphorical constructions and these suggested a number of themes relating to their orientations to the literacy practices in which they are involved. I have chosen to focus on three themes: "finishing" *hifth*, students' difficulties and endurance on the "journey" and in the "race", and successful Qur'anic literacy learning as transformation. I have analysed these themes in Chapter 5.

My critical discourse analysis of the interview data focused on patterns of transitivity, the use of quoted speech, turn-taking and the choice of pronouns. I worked from Hilary Janks' (1997 & 2010) lists of key linguistic features for verbal analysis based on Michael Halliday's (1985) and Norman Fairclough's (1989) work.

Students at this school spend as much time, if not more, on their school work at home (see Appendix 3 for the suggested daily timetable). Thus, during the interviews, participants often talked about both school and home literacy events and practices involved in *hifth*. Some of

these practices, such as reading the Qur'an in English and listening to audio recordings of Qur'anic recitations, take place only at home. As students are expected to arrive at school each day "ready with all their work" (Teachers' guide to the school's "memorisation methodology"), the memorisation of the text should also take place at home. However, as my fieldwork was school-based, I focus on the practice of reciting by participants at school, rather than memorisation at home. Nevertheless, the activities involved in retaining recall of the already memorised text are described and explained as these occur across contexts.

I undertook brief content analyses of selected artefacts gathered at the school, identifying orientations to text and practices. In my analysis of pages in Zainab's copy of the Qur'an, I have approached the written text as multimodal artefact (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This data is described and analysed as teaching and learning material, and as the collaborative product of a number of unnamed teachers and students. Selected verbal and visual elements of these pages are explained.

Conclusion

My data analysis is presented in the following two chapters. In Chapter 4, I identify the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifh* at this school and discuss participants' orientations to these practices, and to the recited and written text of the Qur'an. In Chapter 5, interview and observation data are analysed in more detail in order to explore participants' identifications and investments, and affective engagement with their Qur'anic literacy practices.

Chapter 4: Qur'anic literacy as disciplined practice

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the three participants and the practices of Qur'anic schooling at this school, including descriptions of the structuring of the school day and week. The language and literacy practices that constitute *hifth* are identified and discussed. Teachers mostly made use of spoken and written English to teach students how to read and recite the Qur'an in Arabic. The texts in use in the *hifth* classroom included the Qur'an in Arabic script, as well as textbooks and worksheets incorporating Arabic script, transliterated Arabic and English.

During the interviews, all of the participants described how “focused” they had to be in order to succeed in their endeavours. Successful students would “have to be completely focused” on their studies (Interview with Fatima, 31/07/12). Students who were “focused” were able to direct their attention to the task at hand – daily recitation – and concentrate their effort on successfully recalling and reciting each day's lessons. This embodied orientation towards their studies required sustained mental, physical and spiritual effort. This sustained effort was identified by participants as disciplined practice.

Participants co-constructed a notion of students' “focus” on “[their] Qur'an” (Group interview, 27/08/12). Boyle's (2006) study describes the narrow initial focus of Islamic education which gradually increases to include a broader range of subjects (Boyle, 2006: 485). In this chapter, *hifth* is presented as a narrow “focus” on the goals of *hifth*. These goals are identified as:

- passing each “mini exam” (Interview with Fatima, 31/07/12) or succeeding in daily assessment by the teacher of the student's recall and recitation of a part of the Qur'an,
- “finishing” or successfully completing the memorisation and recitation of the whole Qur'an thereby joining the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) of *huffaz*,
- achieving transformation or becoming *haafithaat*, and
- earning a place in the imagined community (Kanno & Norton, 2003) in *Jannah* or Paradise (and avoiding *Jahannam* or Hell).

As *hifth* “is all about reading [reciting]” (Teachers' guide to the school's “memorisation methodology”), this chapter will focus on the first of these goals.

The participants

Amina: “The rebellious one”

Amina began *hifth* at the school in the year the girls’ school opened. She was eleven at the time and already enrolled in Grade 5 at an Islamic public primary school from which she withdrew during the first term. She recounted how she had first wanted to undertake *hifth* when she was eight years old; however, her mother would not allow her to withdraw from mainstream schooling because she was “too young” (Individual interview, 14/08/12). Three years later, her mother relented and agreed to enrol her at the school. Amina’s mother had been widowed when Amina was five and she was raising her three children on her own. A year after her husband’s death, she had enrolled her son at the boys’ *hifth* school where he had become a boarder after his first year of study. He was eight years old when he began *hifth*. Amina’s mother was not employed at the time the study was undertaken (Amina described her mother as a housewife) thus her decision to enrol her son at the boys’ school could also have been motivated by financial need. Amina identified her older brother’s transformation after undertaking *hifth* as the inspiration for her desire to undertake *hifth* herself. Amina had recounted with laughter that she had been, and was at times still, “the rebellious one” (Individual interview, 14/08/12) in the family. She did detail how long her brother had taken to complete *hifth*, however, she later suggested that he had undertaken *hifth* for a shorter time than she had.

At the outset of the study, the principal had not been satisfied with Amina’s progress, deciding not to promote her to a more advanced class. She was hoping to “finish”, or complete the memorisation of the entire Qur’an, and thereafter graduate from the school the following year. (Upon visiting the school a few months after I had completed the field work, Amina told me that she had “finished” and had thus been promoted to the *tamat* [graduating] class). Amina indicated that she hoped to attend university and an Islamic institute of higher education. However, when later asked about her future plans during one of the group discussions, Amina had said that she planned to go to beauty school in the hope that she might one day be able to “travel the world for free” (Group interview, 28/08/12) by working aboard a cruise ship. This latter aspiration showed Amina’s keen interest and curiosity in a broad range of people (she had Muslim friends who were studying in Egypt and also had a number of non-Muslim friends), as well as her desire for financial independence.

Fatima: “Second in Qur’an”

Fatima had withdrawn from an Islamic independent high school at the end of Grade 9. This school offered both the national curriculum and a religious curriculum adapted from that of an established group of schools in Egypt. Fatima said that she had wanted to undertake *hifth* because she admired those who did and because she could see that participants’ *imaan* [faith] became stronger through the practice. Fatima’s brother was already undertaking *hifth*. Her parents were supportive and very proud of her decision to undertake *hifth*. However, she also suggested that they would have preferred her to matriculate first. Thus, Fatima’s father had insisted that she attend the English and Maths classes that were offered at the school. Fatima said that she had always enjoyed school and that she thought it was “vital” (Questionnaire, 20/07/12) that she return to mainstream in order to complete her schooling and matriculate. Both of Fatima’s parents were employed: her mother as a teacher and her father as the director of his own advertising and marketing company. Fatima spoke of her own aspiration for a career; she was considering completing her matric at a FET college and thereafter enrolling on a culinary course or studying accounting.

Fatima had taken her first exams at the school just before I conducted the interviews with the group. She was very pleased with her results, reporting that she had achieved a hundred percent in all her subjects and was placed second in her class for Qur’anic memorisation and recitation.

Zainab: “Old furniture here”

Zainab was ten years old when she began *hifth* at the school. She had been attending a very small Islamic private primary school (a school which offered religious education, as well as literacy and numeracy, to twenty children at a house which was used as the school building) from which she withdrew at the beginning of Grade 5. Zainab recounted how her mother had first suggested *hifth* to both her older sister and her as this “home school” (Individual interview, 31/07/12) could not offer them any further grades. Zainab’s sister did not wish to undertake *hifth* and Zainab too was initially unsure. However, she went for an interview at the school and was persuaded to enrol after this visit.

Zainab said that her sister (as well as her primary school teacher) had encouraged her to undertake *hifth* as “the outcome is amazing” (Questionnaire, 19/07/12) and because it was a means for participants to draw closer to God. Her sister had already completed her religious

higher education and was teaching at a religious higher education institution at the time. Zainab listed a number of aspirations. She herself hoped to enrol on a four year course at a religious higher education institution in order to qualify as a *mu'allima* [a female religious education teacher]. Thereafter, she planned to complete her matric by attending after-hours classes at one of the public high schools which offered "night school" (Individual interview, 31/07/12) in Cape Town. Zainab also indicated that she wanted to take a course in Montessori education. She keenly desired to open her own "home school" (Individual interview, 31/07/12), a preschool or primary school which offered *hifh* and followed a broadly Montessori approach. Both of Zainab's parents were employed: her mother as a dressmaker and her father as an electrical engineer.

Zainab described herself and Amina as "old students – old furniture here" (Group interview, 27/08/12). Like Amina, Zainab was hoping to "finish" and graduate from the school the following year.

The practices of Qur'anic schooling

The practices of *hifh* at this school are described in terms of the school's projected learning trajectory, participants' actual learning trajectories, the suggested daily timetable, and the observed structure of the school day.

The projected learning trajectory

When the girls' *hifh* school was opened in 2006, girls from the age of four years old were accepted. Two years later, when a preschool was opened on the school grounds, children between the ages of two and six years old were able to begin both their religious and non-religious schooling there. (The preschool was registered as a "Montessori and *hifh*" school. Children were taught how to read the Qur'an with *tajweed* [following the rules of pronunciation] and thereafter began memorising the text, beginning with *Juz Ammah* [the 30th part of the Qur'an, consisting of most of the shortest chapters] and moving on to *Juz Tabaraq* [the 29th part of the Qur'an] in their second year.) Thereafter, however, these children had to be homeschooled or enrolled at a primary school if they were to complete the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) of their schooling. They could then enrol either at the girls' or the boys' school to complete their *hifh* studies.

Thus, following the school's projected learning trajectory, students would begin in the preschool, age five to six, and then re-join the school when they were nine or ten years old to undertake *hifth*. Following the school's curriculum, students would take four to five years to successfully complete their *hifth* studies. Having memorised the entire Qur'an, students could take a further year to "consolidate" the text. However, they were advised that, if they revised their "back lessons" [prior learning] each day, they would not require a full year in which to revise and consolidate the text (Information sheet given to prospective parents).

The school's stated motto is "proper recitation [reading aloud] before memorization" (School brochure dated 2012-2014). Thus, all first year students were required to successfully complete the "bridging course" in *tajweed* before they would be allowed to begin the memorisation of the Qur'an. This course, the school suggested, took about three months to complete (Information sheet given to parents of first year students dated 2006). During the first two weeks, a student would learn the "proper" pronunciation of the letters of the Arabic alphabet. Over the course of the next six weeks, she would learn how to read the Arabic script aloud by doing so daily to her teacher from the *Yassarnal Qur'an* [a locally published series of primers on Classical Arabic]. After both her teacher and the principal had assessed her progress, she would begin "inside reading [reading aloud]" of the Qur'an from *Juz Ammah*. She would continue practising her reading for a further month until her teacher and the principal were satisfied that she was ready to begin memorising the text.

At the time the study was undertaken, very few students at the girls' school had as yet completed this learning trajectory (in other words, had begun their schooling at the preschool and re-joined the school to successfully complete their *hifth* and graduate from the school in four to five years). In practice, the school administration tried to accommodate as many students as possible each year. Children and teens were not required to be a particular age or to demonstrate any particular ability to be accepted at the school. There were first year students at the girls' school who were eight years old. However, there were also students who had only begun *hifth* after they had matriculated. Some students had already memorised a number of *ajzaa* or had learnt to identify the Arabic letters at a *madrasah* before they enrolled at the school. Other students, however, had no prior learning of Arabic or *tajweed*.

The school's learning trajectory is constructed on the assumption that students would complete the amount of work required at each level, or more, in a year and thus could successfully

complete their studies in four to five years. Of the ten girls who graduated at the end of 2012, four of them took three to four years to complete their *hifth* (School magazine published in November 2012). However, three of those graduates had taken more than five years to complete their studies (School magazine published in November 2012). Thus, students' actual learning trajectories potentially contradict the school's projected learning trajectory. Of the three participants in this study, two would take longer than five years to successfully complete their *hifth*.

The suggested daily timetable

According to this timetable, students should wake up at four o'clock in the morning to revise that day's lesson (see Appendix 3). Students should also revise the previous day's lesson and their "back lessons". At half past six, students have breakfast and get ready for school. The school uniform consists of an *abaya* [a long, loose over-garment most often black] worn over black trousers and black shoes, and a "scarf" worn with a blue headband covering the hairline. Students should be at school by half past seven and they are dismissed from school at two o'clock in the afternoon. Students are advised to have lunch and rest when they get home. After they perform their afternoon prayers, students should study the following day's lesson for an hour. They revise that day's lesson for an hour before they perform their evening prayers. Before they perform their final prayers of the day, students should revise their "back lessons".

Not all of the students, however, followed this timetable. In the following extract, Fatima had been asked if she tried to adhere to the suggested timetable. She explained why she did not and described her own study routine at home.

Extract 1

Um, I – I can't stick to that programme . because of my house [laughs], so like there's a lot of chores and stuff you do, and when you come home and you're very tired and it's like, when I come home, I try to get a nap and then go shower, and then I, uh, usually learn like after *maghrib* [one of the five obligatory daily prayers which is performed after sunset], that time, at night. I don't find it so easy to learn in the afternoon and in the morning, so at night is my time when I sit. (Individual interview, 30/07/12)

Fatima further suggested that "being a girl" (Individual interview, 30/07/12) she was given more chores and responsibilities at home than her brother, and, speaking for the other girls (by switching from first to second person in the above extract) that these demands on her time were shared by her peers.

The school day

The school day begins with a short assembly lead by the principal. Thereafter, students go to their assigned classrooms where they remain for most of the school day. Most of these classrooms are small and all of them are carpeted. Students and teachers remove their shoes before entering the classroom and sit on the floor at small, low desks. (In Zainab's classroom, however, the teacher sits on a chair at a large desk and students sit on a chair near her when they came up to recite to her). Only the prayer room, which is also used as a classroom, makes much use of the walls for display. These walls are decorated with Arabic script, as well as two large posters in Arabic and English, which both prominently display the *hadith* [a saying, act or teaching of the Prophet Muhammad]: "The best of you are those who learn the Quran and teach it". Most of the other classrooms have one or two small items up on the walls, such as a calendar or timetable. All of the classrooms have whiteboards which teachers make use of during Islamic Studies.

Classes are constituted of small, mixed age groups: Fatima's class, for example, consisted of twelve students and Zainab's class consisted of fourteen. Most students sit around the periphery of the classroom, sometimes leaning against the walls, or in irregular rows. Students take a range of seating positions, including kneeling, sitting cross-legged, and sitting clasping their knees. During *hifth* periods, the longest of which is over two hours, both students and teachers change seating positions fairly frequently. As they recite, some students rock from side to side or backwards and forwards, a movement which has been identified as an aid to memorisation (Rosowsky, 2001: 68). Students are allowed to move the desks freely and may move about the room fairly often in order to pair up with peers. Teachers, however, remain in the same place in the classroom, establishing their positions of authority and enabling them to observe the whole class (Gent, 2011: 6).

During the first period, students rehearse and recite that day's "new lesson" or *sabaq* [literally "lesson", part of the Qur'an which has been memorised most recently, but not yet recited for assessment] to their teacher (see Appendix 3). This lesson would have been set by the teacher on the previous day. First year students would begin with a "new lesson" of ten lines and progress to that of a page during the course of the year (Information sheet given to the parents of first year students dated 2009). Students who have been identified as more able by teachers would be set a "new lesson" of two or three pages or more. This period lasts about an hour and

is followed by a period of an hour and a half in which students rehearse and recite the previous day's lesson or *sabaq dhor* [literally "lesson revision", part of the Qur'an which was recited as "new lesson" the day before]. This "recent" lesson may be recited with the "new lesson" to the teacher. However, the student may recite most of this part to a peer. Thereafter, students are given a break of twenty minutes. They then have a third period of two hours and twenty-five minutes in which to rehearse and recite their "back lessons" or *dhor* [literally "revision", parts of the Qur'an which have already been memorised and recited]. Students are expected to revise at least a section the length of one *juz* or twenty pages daily. More advanced students revise about two and a half *ajzaa* daily. At the end of the third period, students are given a short break before assembling for prayers. The final lesson of the day is a half an hour of Islamic Studies, including *tajweed* lessons.

On Fridays, students only attend *hifh* lessons and are dismissed from school at half past eleven. On Saturdays, students attend *hifh* lessons until ten o'clock. Those students who stay for English and Maths lessons finish at half past twelve on Saturdays.

The language and literacy practices that constitute *hifh*

The key language and literacy practices involved in *hifh* at this school are identified as:

- reading, reciting and listening to the Qur'an in Arabic (in Arabic script),
- memorising the Qur'an in Arabic in Arabic script, and
- knowing and understanding the social practices at this school and in the broader Muslim community (see Table 1).

Practices as named by participants	Practices referred to by participants
Reading the Qur'an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading aloud the text in Arabic (while looking at the text) • reciting the text in Arabic (without looking at the text)
Reciting the Qur'an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repeating aloud of the text in Arabic from memory
<i>Bacha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reciting (repeating aloud) the Qur'an in Arabic • reciting part of the Arabic Qur'an in prayer
Memorising the Qur'an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • committing the text in Arabic (in Arabic script) to memory

Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Qur'an <i>hifth</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> memorising the text in Arabic script undertaking <i>hifth</i>
Knowing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Qur'an the practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> having successfully memorised the text being familiar with the text in Arabic script taking up responsibilities associated with literacy and social practices sharing experiences of the social practices in this Muslim community
Not knowing the meaning of the Qur'an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not comprehending the text in Arabic (in Arabic script)
Understanding the practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being familiar with social practices in this Muslim community showing empathy
Not understanding [the language of] the Qur'an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not comprehending the text in Arabic (in Arabic script)
"Receiving the message or messages" of/in the Qur'an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying the text as Allah's words personally addressed to each reader

Table 1: Language and literacy practices most frequently referred to by participants in the interviews

Reading: "Running [the memorised text] through the mind"

Both students and teachers tended to use the terms "reading" and "reciting" synonymously to refer to the repetition of the text from memory, most often aloud and often before a single "listener", and used the term "reading" more often than "reciting" to refer to this practice. However, in some of the documents produced by the school there is an ambiguity in the use of these two terms. The school brochure states that the school's motto is "proper recitation before memorization" and an information sheet informs prospective parents that first year students "must be able to recite fluently before starting to memorize the Qur'an". In both of these documents, "recitation" and "recite" are used to refer to the practice of reading aloud.

The school makes use of a series of textbooks published in Saudi Arabia and titled *Tajweed Rules of the Qur'an*. The book is written by US Qur'anic literacy teacher Kareema Carol Czerepinski, herself a *haafithah*, and is aimed at English speaking students capable of reading Arabic at an

elementary level (Czerepinski, 2000: 9). Following the textbook, first year students are taught that their reading of the Qur'an should always be audible and always with *tajweed* (Czerepinski, 2000: 18). Silent reading is not recognised as reading; it is referred to only as "looking" (ibid.). Thus, when participants talked about their "reading" of the Qur'an in Arabic, they referred either to reading the text aloud (while looking at or following the lines of Arabic script) or reciting the text (without looking at or following the lines of Arabic script). Both of these practices occur in the classroom and at home; the former most often at home, when students are memorising the following day's lesson, and the latter in the classroom, where students are expected to have already memorised all of that day's lessons. As the memorisation and recall of the text is the primary goal of *hifth*, the practice which participants most often refer to when talking about "reading" the Qur'an is the audible repetition of the text from memory.

However, the student is also encouraged to practice "silently running the memorized part for the day through his mind before he sleeps" to avoid forgetting already memorised parts of the text (a photocopied students' guide to memorisation and recitation given to first year students). Students are encouraged to practice this silent repetition of the text from memory daily at home. This is considered revision which Amina described as "keeping [the memorised text]" which involved "constantly going over [the text]" at home and at school (Group interview, 27/08/12). All of the participants described their difficulties to recall the text when they had not revised their "back lessons" each day. Describing the loss of recall of memorised text, Zainab recounted the *hadith*: "The Qur'an leaves you faster than the camel that's left untied" (Group interview, 21/08/12). This "going over" of the text includes both silent and audible repetition of the text from memory. Thus, Fatima described how a student would "say a [sic] *ayah* [a line or verse of the Qur'an] in [her] brain" and "say the *ayah*" (Group interview, 28/08/12). Fatima and Zainab described how they listened to audio recordings of the Qur'anic recitations which they had stored on their cell phones (Group interview, 28/08/12) (cf. Gent, 2011). Fatima suggested that she did so at the end of the day on days when she may have been too tired to continue audibly or silently repeating the text. The memorised text would thus "run through the mind" as participants listened through earphones while they rested or slept.

Reciting: "*Bacha! Bacha! Bacha!*"

Participants identified the Malay word *bacha* as a term used by teachers and taken up by students to mean "recite" (Group interview, 21/08/12). Both teachers and students used it to

refer to reciting, however, teachers used it more often as a command and a reprimand directed at students who were not reciting. In the first group interview, Amina humorously demonstrated this use of the term by repeating the often heard command to “*Bacha! Bacha! Bacha!*” (Group interview, 21/08/12). During the same interview, Fatima recalled her unfamiliarity with the word before beginning *hifh* at the school.

Extract 2

Fatima: When I came here, like this year, I asked my teacher like, um – I didn’t ask her but like – when I came here, so I asked her like, “Must I carry on? Come recite?”, and she’s like, “No, you can come *bacha*”. Like . Okay! But it’s like – because usually you’ll just think they recite and whatever – because recite does sound better than *bacha!* – but .

Zainab: But it just sticks – *bacha* just sticks – because everybody says it.

Fatima: Uhh. [Agrees] Because the teacher will tell you the whole time, “Come *bacha*” and “You must come *bacha* now”.

Amina: And Sheikh will tell you, “*Bacha, bacha, bacha, bacha!*” Engraved in your brain already! [Laughs] (Group interview, 21/08/12)

Although the word was used regularly in classroom interactions, it was not observed in any of the written documents produced by the school. These were mostly in English, but often included some Arabic. Consider Appendix 3. This document includes a number of (commonly borrowed) transliterated Arabic words and phrases. Most of these are religious names or expressions, such as *solaah* [prayer] and *Insha-Allah* [Arabic, “God willing”]. However, the non-religious expression *shukran* [Arabic, “Thank you”] is also included. Although they made regular use of specific Malay and Urdu words, such as *bacha* and *dhor*, participants mostly borrowed Arabic words and phrases in their speech. These included both religious and non-religious expressions.

During the first of the group interviews, I asked the girls to explain the meaning and consider the origin of the word *bacha*. Amina immediately defined the word as “recite” and Zainab identified that the word was Malay (Group interview, 21/08/12). However, Fatima suggested that the word was “like slang” and “not a language”. She recognised the origin of the word as “Cape Malay” and explained that it was “from the Malay, when they came here [to South Africa], and they like came with that word” (Group interview, 21/08/12). Consider the following extract. Participants were listing Malay words and expressions which they said Muslims in Cape Town used.

Extract 3

Amina: We [Muslims in Cape Town] must say . *kanala* [Malay, “Please”], *shukran* [Arabic, “Thank you”], *afwan* [Arabic, “You’re welcome”].

Zainab: No, but *shukran* is Arabic!

Fatima: It is Arabic.

Zainab: *Kanala* and, um . . . *trammakassie* [Malay, “Thank you”] . [Laughs] *Labarang* [Malay name of the festival marking the end of the fast of Ramadan]!

Fatima: It’s actually *Eid* [Arabic name of the festival marking the end of the fast of Ramadan] (Group interview, 21/08/12)

By listing both Malay and Arabic words and expressions, Amina seems not to clearly distinguish between the two languages. She further suggests that borrowing these words and phrases is appropriate, and possibly even obligatory, for local Muslims. Zainab’s faltering attempt to identify more Malay words and expressions and her laughter suggest that she does not make regular use of these.

Students are required to recite before an audience both at school and mosque. The esteem in which the school’s founder is held is based in part on his public recitation at the *Al Haram* in *Makkah*. The boys at this school lead *taraweeh* [prayers performed only during Ramadan] and may be sent to lead *taraweeh* across the country. This participation, the school’s website states, develops their public recitation and leadership skills. Although the girls do not have the same opportunities to recite before the broader Muslim community, they are encouraged by the principal to do so at a *gaatam* [a social gathering held during Ramadan at which the whole Qur’an is recited]. Moreover, in 2012, a mosque on the Cape Flats hosted its first *hifth* competition for girls and women, suggesting that there may be increasing opportunities for the girls at this school to participate in their community of practice. All three participants, however, remained quite ambivalent about developing their skills in reciting by increasing their participation while still *hifth* students or continuing their participation as *haafithaat*. Instead, they described reciting the Qur’an in a number of different contexts outside of school and mosque for a range of purposes, including “for protection” (Group interview, 28/08/12). They agreed that it was not necessary to know the meaning of the text which they were reciting. Fatima explained that “you don’t have to know the meaning [of the lines or chapters recited], you just have to know what’s it [sic] for” (Group interview, 28/08/12). Amina further described how participants and their peers “were brought up” (Group interview, 28/08/12) with this practice and common use of Qur’anic recitation skills.

At this school, practitioners focus primarily on demonstrating accuracy in reciting (word-for-word recall of the text and “proper” pronunciation of the language), rather than engaging the audience through the melodious quality of the recitation or *lagu* [the musicality of the voice when reciting]. Fatima’s teacher reminded her class that they had enrolled at the school to learn “to read the Qur’an by *tajweed*”, not to become *qurra* [literally “readers” or experts at Qur’anic recitation] (Field notes, 20/06/12).

Monitoring of errors

In Islamic law, a distinction is drawn between two kinds of *fard* [obligation]: *fard ‘ayn* or that which is incumbent on all Muslims and *fard kifayah* or that which some Muslims comply with on behalf of the whole Muslim community, of which the memorisation of the Qur’an is an example (Gent, 2013: 39). Students are taught that it is *fard kifayah* to learn all the rules of *tajweed* (Introduction to *tajweed* for first year students produced by the school).

Thus, reciting the Qur’an with *tajweed* is constructed as a moral obligation. However, the meaning of *tajweed* shifts across contexts. In the foreword to their *tajweed* textbook, first year students read that, since the Qur’an was revealed “in a clear Arabic tongue”, its recitation should be appropriate to the form in which it was revealed to and passed on by the Prophet Muhammad (Rushdi Sawyd in Czerepinski, 2000: 5). Thus, reciting the Qur’an with *tajweed* means reciting the text with “the correct pronunciation” (ibid.). Drawing on the Arabic root of the word *tajweed*, Czerepinski suggests that a recitation with *tajweed* is improved or corrected and thus “good” or better than a recitation which does not adhere to the rules of *tajweed* (Czerepinski, 2000: 23). Drawing on the same definition, the author of a school handout suggests that to recite the Qur’an with *tajweed* is “to recite the text well” (Introduction to *tajweed* for first year students produced by the school). In the classroom, the meaning of *tajweed* shifts yet again as these definitions are taken up by teachers and students. On the day before the first year students’ first *hifth* exam, while revising for the exam, one of the teachers asked the junior students to answer the question, “What is the benefit of learning *tajweed*?” A student correctly answered the question by saying, “So that we can read the Qur’an with perfection” (Field notes, 20/06/12). Thus, recitation with *tajweed* refers to “perfect” recitation. However, in contrast to this, Fatima’s teacher told the senior students that “if you make a few mistakes [during the exam], it’s okay” (Field notes, 20/06/12).

Students are taught that “correcting reading precedes memorization” (Photocopied students’ guide to memorisation and recitation given to first year students). This “correcting” is performed by both the student and teacher (or principal) in face-to-face interaction and includes identifying the vowels or *harakat* and accurately producing the vowel sounds (Photocopied students’ guide to memorisation and recitation given to first year students). It is assumed that students will not “read [read aloud or recite] correctly” if they attempt to do so on their own. Thus, students’ reading and reciting in the *hifth* classroom is mediated by a recognised teacher. The practice of “correcting reading” refers to the teacher’s “correct” modelling or reciting to the student, as well as the student’s efforts to “perfect” her reading of her “new lesson” before she memorises the text thus potentially enabling her thereafter to “perfectly” recite it to her teacher. As students learn their role in the classroom, they increasingly take up this monitoring of their own and peers’ recitations.

Before beginning recitation, the student is taught to “make *isti’adhah* [a brief recitation aimed at seeking refuge with Allah against Satan]” (Introduction to *tajweed* for first year students produced by the school). By doing so, the student seeks to avoid producing a poor recitation or “imperfect” rendition of Allah’s “perfect” speech thus offending Allah (cf. Moore, 2006). Errors in recitation are identified as “clear errors” (*lahn jaliyy*) or “hidden errors” (*lahn khafiyy*) (Introduction to *tajweed* for first year students produced by the school). “Clear errors” are “clear” or obvious to any Muslim, and are monitored by the principal, teachers and peers. A student is not allowed to make any “clear errors” of which she is aware and which she does not attempt to correct. “Hidden errors”, however, are only obvious to those who have studied *tajweed*. These errors should be avoided. Thus, the student’s moral obligation in recitation is to know which practices are identified as “correct” and morally right (thus permissible) and which are identified as “incorrect” and morally wrong (thus prohibited or *haram*). In practice, she has to apply this knowledge to her recitation by “monitoring” her performance. This monitoring is undertaken by participants themselves, peers, teachers and the principal, and is largely constituted of identifying errors and correcting them. A student’s progress in her *hifth* is largely contingent on avoiding making errors in recitation or repeating errors already made.

Each day, the student has to recite her “new lesson” to her teacher “slowly and perfectly” (Teachers’ guide to the school’s “memorisation methodology”). The student is not allowed to make any errors during this recitation. If she does so, she has to repeat her “new lesson” until she has recited it “perfectly”. A number of errors in “reading [recitation]” are identified by

teachers, including “stucks”, “mistakes”, “tolds” and “doubts”. These errors are recorded in the student’s “Daily Progress Monitoring Book”. In the classroom, this booklet is referred to as the student’s “*dhor* book”, suggesting teachers’ and students’ recognition of the importance of revision to students’ progress in *hifh*.

The teachers’ guide to the school’s “memorisation methodology” identifies an error as:

- a “stuck” or an instance when a student has recited incorrectly and rectified her error,
- a “mistake” or an instance when a student has recited incorrectly and has not identified and thus corrected her error. These errors are “rectified” by peers during peer-to-peer recitation and recorded as such in the student’s “*dhor* book”,
- a “told” or an instance when a student has recited incorrectly and the teacher has “rectified” her error, recording it as such in the student’s “*dhor* book”, or
- a “doubt” or a hesitation by the student in her recitation.

The guide further stipulates that, in recitations of “back lessons”, the student is allowed to make one “mistake” and one “told” in a “quarter” [a lesson or part of a lesson the length of one quarter of one *juz*]. Teachers will not set a “new lesson” for any student who cannot also recall and recite her “back lessons” accurately and fluently. The student has to demonstrate that her prior learning has remained “solid” (Teachers’ guide to the school’s “memorisation methodology”) and is not “shaky” (Teacher’s comment written in Fatima’s “*dhor* book”). These descriptions reinforce that of the “consolidation” of the text. If any of her daily recitations of her “back lessons” is not satisfactory, the student has to repeat that particular “round” before she can progress to the next.

Consider Appendices 5 and 6. These three pages record Zainab’s progress during the week of 3-9 November 2012.

The Qur’an as recited and written text

Students were taught to orient themselves “respectfully” towards both *al-Qur’an* [the oral text] and the *mushaf* [the written text as physical object or printed book]. In Fatima’s class, one of the first year students was reprimanded for stepping over a peer’s copy of the Qur’an which was placed on her desk, while Zainab’s teacher told her class to “have respect for the Qur’an that’s being recited” (Field notes, 18/06/12) when a number of students who had already finished their work were talking among themselves at the end of the day. Thus, in the classroom,

students took up an embodied orientation to the Qur'an as recited text and physical artefact. They also learnt to orient to the Arabic text as meaningful because Allah's literal words (Czerepinski, 2000: 18) (cf. Moore, 2011) and to engage with the recited Qur'an emotively and intuitively (Martin, 2004) (cf. Boyle, 2006; Moore, 2006).

Participants insisted on always carrying a printed copy of the Qur'an in Arabic script with them. This, they insisted, was for practical purposes. Amina recounted how she used her "pocket Qur'an" (Group interview, 28/08/12) when she was not at home, but needed to begin learning the following day's lesson, while Fatima suggested that students could always and easily refer back to the text when reciting the Qur'an if they carried a printed copy of it on them. Amina reiterated that "Sheikh [The principal] says that wherever you go your Qur'an must go with you" (Group interview, 28/08/12). The principal's command and participants' consequent insistence on always carrying a printed copy of the Qur'an with them seems to contradict the purpose of their endeavours to memorise and thus "preserve" the text. Participants were familiar with the metaphors used to describe the embodiment of the text "in the heart or mind" by those who had memorised it. However, Amina dismissed this construction by suggesting that "even though it's [the Qur'an] supposed to be in your head and in your heart... it's still good to carry it [a printed copy of the Qur'an] with you... [Speaks more quietly] 'cause it's almost like a protection" (Group interview, 28/08/12). Amina's acknowledgement that the text ought to be in a student's "head" and "heart" nevertheless suggests ambivalence about locating the text in the mind or memory. Carrying a printed copy of the Qur'an with her affords "protection" from the possibility of forgetting the text. There is also an implicit suggestion that the Qur'an as physical object provides "protection" from "wrong". Amina had already spoken of the Qur'an "protecting" Muslims from "wrong stuff" (Individual interview, 14/08/12). Muslims believe that the Qur'an "watches over them" (Martin, 2004: 563), positioning the text as far more powerful than those reading and hearing it.

Consider Appendices 7 and 8. These two pages in Zainab's copy of the Qur'an were included as a "back lesson" on 6 November 2012. The writing and/or semiotic mark-making which teachers and peers have undertaken when "monitoring" Zainab's past recitations in her copy of the Qur'an is collaborative. A number of people have been and will be involved in this writing and/or mark-making at different stages of her learning. There is most often no identifiable writer/creator. Zainab reported that it was "not necessary" (Field notes, 13/06/13) to be able to

identify who had corrected specific errors nor could she always identify and explain particular past errors. Instead, she made this largely visual information meaningful by relating it to other written and spoken information she had already received about her performance over an extended period of time. In turn, Zainab herself would have made use of the same range of semiotic resources in her own “monitoring” of her peers’ recitations.

Following Brandt and Clinton (2002), the Qur’an as multimodal artefact aggregates the student’s recitations (numerous literacy events) for use in a range of contexts, including school, home and mosque. Teachers’ and peers’ multimodal “monitoring” activities during these recitations, represented verbally and visually in the student’s copy of the Qur’an, become part of the student’s future recitations. Thus, the original literacy event becomes part of future literacy events in other contexts where the exact meanings of the original literacy event and its context no longer matter. As students are encouraged to use a single copy of the Qur’an throughout the course of their *hifth*, the written Qur’an as physical artefact is a durable record of a student’s struggles to achieve mastery of the text.

“Focus” in recitation

The Qur’an as oral text is heard throughout the school and printed copies of the written text are present in each classroom. The written text is also displayed on the walls of the prayer room. In the classroom, the Qur’an, as both recited and written text, and as social actor, demands to be the sole focus of practitioners’ attention (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Teachers expect students to be “focused” on the task at hand, that is, the recitation of the Qur’an. Students who are reciting are considered to be on task and actively engaged in their learning. Individual students who appear to be distracted from the task at hand (often by talking to another student or students) are loudly commanded to *bacha* by their teachers. (A student too might tell one of her peers to *bacha* if she notices that her peer has not been reciting for a fairly long period of time.)

The embodied interactions between teacher and student during recitation in the classroom are framed by a number of objects, including the low desks at which both teachers and students sit, the dress of staff and students, and the written text of the Qur’an (see Figure 1). These objects perform globalizing work by connecting local participants and practices to those making use of similar objects and the same text in their Qur’anic literacy practices in distant social contexts (Brandt & Clinton, 2002).



Figure 1: Video still, 21/08/12

During the first two periods of the day, the student recites her “new lesson” and her “previous” [lesson] in rehearsal to herself a number of times before reciting these lessons in performance to her teacher (cf. Moore, 2008; Gent, 2011). The student approaches the teacher and sits facing her, placing her copy of the Qur’an on the teacher’s desk between them so that the teacher is able to follow the text with her gaze. The body positioning of student and teacher relative to one another and the text creates “a shared, public focus for the organization of attention and action” (Goodwin, 2007, quoted in Moore, 2008: 659). The teacher’s gaze remains on the student’s copy of the Qur’an during much of the recitation (see Figure 2). Thus, the teacher constantly directs the student’s attention to the text. Her body positioning and gaze also provide a model of the appropriate embodied orientation to the text when reading, reciting or listening to the Qur’an (Moore, 2008: 659-660).



Figure 2: Video still, 21/08/12

The student lowers her gaze and might close her eyes while reciting. However, a student most often will open her eyes and cease moving when she has “made a stuck” (or another error) or has faltered (see Figure 2). When students recited in front of a larger audience, such as during the school’s graduation ceremony, they sat quite still when they were reciting, suggesting that students’ rocking movement is mnemonic and is disrupted by anxiety over actual and potential errors in recitation. If the student makes an error in recitation to her teacher, she might partly cover her face with one hand just after she has done so (see Figure 3), suggesting that she is aware that her error is also constructed as morally wrong (cf. Moore, 2008). If the student falters, the teacher will prompt her after a brief pause. When her recitation is faltering or not fluent, the student might be told, “You’re thinking” (Field notes, 30/05/12).



Figure 3: Video still, 21/08/12

The teacher records the student’s errors in the student’s copy of the Qur’an by marking that part of the text which the student has recited incorrectly (see Appendix 7). The teacher might also verbally correct these errors. When she does so, the teacher most often uses utterances, such as “Huh-uh” and “Again”, to alert the student to an error that she has not identified in her recitation. She might also model the line for the student. The teacher most often makes eye contact with the student when she has “made a told” regardless of whether the student has her eyes open or closed (see Figure 1). When correcting herself, the student directs her gaze at the teacher who then nods at a successfully “self-rectified” line. She might also make use of eye contact and/or smile at the student to signal that the student has successfully corrected her recitation.

After reciting her “new lesson” and her “previous” [lesson] to her teacher, the student recites most of her “back lessons” to her peers. The student herself often chooses the peers to whom she recites; these peers would have covered the same amount of work. As the teacher has done, peers mark in pencil in their classmates’ copies of the Qur’an any “mistakes” in recitation which they identify. While they are listening, peers might also verbally correct these errors. However, peers are not always attentive in their “monitoring” and sometimes continue or begin reciting quietly during their classmates’ recitations. While checking students’ “*dhora* books” and listening to those students recite to her, Zainab’s teacher urged her class to “check [for mistakes in peers’ recitations] properly” (Field notes, 6/06/12). She was not always satisfied with students’ assessment of their peers’ recitations. Later she addressed the class on some of the comments which they had recorded in each other’s “*dhora* books”. “I don’t want ‘nice’ or ‘good’. ‘Nice’ is relative to each person. There’s a reason why that ‘rectify’ column is there. I want to know exactly how many mistakes were made”, she said (Field notes, 18/06/12). In Zainab’s class, students’ positive comments on their peers’ recitations are dismissed by the teacher. The teacher focuses on what students are not yet doing correctly both in their recitation and “monitoring” of peers’ performance.

In the following extract, Fatima compares her experiences of mainstream and *hifh* schooling. She contrasts the assessment at her previous school with that at this school, describing the daily assessment by the teachers at this school as more demanding than the summative assessment at mainstream schools.

Extract 4

Normal schools like you have exams every term, here it’s like exam every morning [Laughs] and you have to try your best to do well because you want to finish like on . . . *Ja* [Yes], so that’s . . . Every morning it’s a mini exam for you and . . . to prepare yourself mentally and everything – sometimes it can be very frustrating and at [mainstream] school it’s not that bad like, um, you’ll just walk into the classroom – okay, but you have to have – do [sic] your homework, but you never had to memorise your homework, it’s not like you, say like memorising a textbook. (Individual interview, 31/07/12)

When describing the demands of *hifh*, Fatima emphasises how much of her time both at school and at home is required to memorise and retain her recall of her lessons. Speaking for all of the students, she says that “you have to sit and you have to recite the whole day and you have to be completely focused” (Individual interview, 31/07/12).

Conclusion

The literacy events described and analysed in this chapter exemplify literacy practices in the *hifth* classroom at this school. These local practices are connected to global practice through the use of textbooks, including the series of textbooks on *tajweed* produced in Saudi Arabia. Drawing on the work of Brandt and Clinton (2002), I have approached the written Qur'an as a multimodal literacy artefact and theorised it as a transcontextualizing social agent. The practice of students' reciting to peers and "monitoring" or recording peers' errors in recitation is a modelling of the teacher-student recitation thus an activity that takes students into the community of practice. In carrying out this practice, the girls are constructed by their teachers, and construct themselves and each other, as legitimate peripheral participants in the community of practice. Having identified and discussed the most prominent language and literacy practices of the *hifth* classroom, I now move on to a discussion of participants' identifications and investments, and affective engagement with their literacy practices.

Chapter 5: Successful Qur'anic literacy learning and learners

Introduction

In this chapter, the girls' identifications and investments, and affective engagement with their literacy practices are discussed. I explore how participants construct their identities as successful *hifth* learners, as well as what constitutes successful learning and learners in *hifth*. Participants' difficulties in following the school's projected learning trajectory are identified, as well as their orientations to those difficulties. I argue that participants take up a preferred orientation to the daily demands of *hifth*.

"Finishing" *hifth*

Successful *hifth* at this school culminates in "finishing", or completing the memorisation of the entire Qur'an, and successfully demonstrating the ability to recall and recite the Qur'an accurately and fluently. Moore's (2008) study notes a similar use of the term among the Fulbe in Cameroon. There a student who has recited or read aloud and transcribed the entire Qur'an without error is said to have "finished his Qur'an" (Moore, 2008: 648). Participants metaphorically construct their learning trajectories as journeys. This construction allows participants to describe shared experiences of the difficulties of *hifth*: the "ups and downs", the "rough patches" and the "bumpy roads" (Interview with Amina, 30/07/12). Consider the following extract from a group interview. Prior to this discussion, Amina had described the pressure she felt in the broader Muslim community in Cape Town to always be a role model for girls not undertaking *hifth* (Individual interview, 14/08/12). I asked the girls if they also felt under pressure to be "close to perfect" (Amina's description) in the classroom.

Extract 5

Amina: Not actually.

Zainab: No, because it's the same . [Laughs]

Amina: . because everyone understands, *ja*, everyone understands how you feel because it's the same thing for everyone else.

Fatima: Nobody has it . like perfect . everyone has a rough patch now and then.

Amina: And like Sheikh say [sic], "You take a dip and then you come back up." [While laughing and gesturing a down and up movement with her hand]

Fatima: Mm. [Agrees]

Amina: "You take a dip . [Laughs] and then you come back up." [Again gesturing the same movement]

Fatima: But you must like – it's very hard to .

Amina: . stay up.

Fatima: Stay up there.

Amina: Ja, that's why "you take a dip." [All laugh] Take a break. (Group interview, 27/08/12)

Participants identify themselves and each other as members of this community of practice as they co-construct a shared understanding of what it is like to be a legitimate peripheral participant in this community. Each participant draws on her knowledge of what is "obvious" to all students, or "everyone", as she contributes to the discussion and speaks for the group: Amina agrees with Zainab and elaborates on her statement; Fatima repeats particular words ("everyone") and phrases ("stay up") that Amina has used; and Amina takes up Fatima's image of "rough patches" and extends the metaphor of a journey complicated by "ups and downs", echoing an earlier reference made by Fatima to feeling at times like she was on an "emotional rollercoaster" (Group interview, 27/08/12) when managing the demands of *hifh* and home life. Participants suggest that all students experience "rough patches": intermittent problems or difficulties, either at a particular time (such as, Fatima had earlier suggested, after the death of a family member) or over an extended period of time, which result in little or a lack of progress in learning. Thus, peers are not critical of others' performance that is not "close to perfect". Instead, "everyone understands" or has empathy for peers as legitimate peripheral participants in this community.

Revoicing (Bakhtin, 1981) the principal, Amina suggests that low points will inevitably be followed by high points, and that students will inevitably progress if they continue their studies. Amina's gesture reinforces the image of constantly and abruptly changing momentum, such as that of a rollercoaster. The girls' laughter suggests that they are familiar with both the shared experience of "ups and downs" and the principal's perhaps often-repeated description of their learning trajectories. Peers understand, Amina further suggests, the "ups", or moments of achievement and high motivation, as well as the "downs", or lack of accomplishment and moments of low motivation. Despite her peers' support, Fatima's interjection shows her anxiety about the requirement to "stay up there", or maintain steady progress and motivation. Moreover, Amina rewords the principal's statement, suggesting that maintaining daily "close to perfect" performance over an extended period of time is very difficult, if not impossible. The construction of participants' learning trajectories as sometimes slow or stalled journeys complicated by "ups and downs" further suggests students' varying and varied pace of learning. All students experience "rough patches"; the frequency and duration of these, however, is particular to each of them. Thus, participants suggest, each student learns at her own pace.

At the same time, participants construct their learning trajectories as a race which ought to be completed within a set time – or indeed as quickly as possible (cf. Extract 4). This conflicting construction allows participants to describe their individual experiences of learning at a pace set by their peers. This is a noticeable difference to practices of Qur’anic schooling described in prior studies. These studies identify Qur’anic literacy learning as self-paced (cf. Wagner & Lotfi, 1983; Boyle, 2006; Moore, 2006). Consider the following extract from a group interview. I asked participants if they were aware of their peers’ progress and how their own progress compared to that of their peers’.

Extract 6

Amina: Yes! You’re always aware of that.

Zainab: Yes.

Amina: That’s the one thing you’re most aware of.

Fatima: Yes.

Amina: Because it’s like, “Oh my word, she’s like running past me.”

Fatima: Ja!

Zainab: And you’re in a competition all the time.

Amina: Ja! Oh, definitely.

Zainab: Especially with your friends and then, um . one minute you are ahead of them and then the next minute they far, uh .

Amina: . ahead of you.

Fatima: Uhh [Agrees]. And then you’re like . “What?”

Zainab: It puts you down also.

Fatima: Uhh.

Zainab: It’s like, “What happened to me?”

Fatima: That competition like . keeps you like . how can I say?

Amina: Keeps you going.

Fatima: Ja! Keeps you going – and you know it – and you’re not gonna . It’s – it’s, um . My mommy say [sic] that competition is good sometimes, like .

Amina: Ja, *good* competition.

Zainab: Just don’t get competitive.

Fatima: Like really .

Zainab: Don’t get very competitive. [Laughs]

Fatima: . don’t let it get to you that bad.

Amina: Ja, because if it doesn’t work out the way that you want it then . .

Fatima: But sometimes you can also see, I think, if somebody goes past you and they were behind you, then that means that you slacking and something’s wrong with you, then that makes you pick up again and stuff like that.

Amina: Ja, and I think it – how can I say? It’s almost like it gives you a jumpstart.

Zainab and Fatima: Ja.

Amina: It gives you a jumpstart again and then it’s like . “Okay . Listen, I know what my purpose is – I know what my goal is – and I must just do it.” Like that.

Zainab: Even Sheikh says that competition is good – you must – with your friend – you must say, “Okay, I’m gonna finish now [Taps on table] and then you’re gonna finish then [Taps on table] or we’re gonna finish together” and then it’s like .

Amina: Ja.

Zainab: You must keep up with each other.

Amina: But he [the principal] also says don't slack in your back lessons because now you're rushing to finish and then you're just going forward [Taps on table] and going forward [Taps on table], and then what happens to your back work at the end of the day? (Group interview, 27/08/12)

All of the participants emphatically agree that they are always and “most aware of” peers’ progress in relation to their own. This awareness takes the form of anxiety about peers who are progressing far more steadily (“running past”); peers’ steady progress suggesting to participants that their own efforts are wanting (“that means that you slacking and something’s wrong with you”). A negative self-appraisal such as this, Zainab suggests, “puts you down” (a phrase used earlier in the discussion by Amina to describe her response to others’ negative evaluations of her progress). However, Fatima and Amina also suggest that “good competition” among peers “keeps you going”, or motivates students, and “makes you pick up again”, or results in students’ increasing the pace of their learning. Participants co-construct a definition of purposeful and productive “competition” as a monitoring of peers’ relative progress in order to maintain their own steady progress. Zainab further describes “competition” between peers as an imperative to “keep up with each other”. She identifies a range of potential learning trajectories among peers all of which describe legitimate peripheral participants co-operatively joining this community of practice together.

At the end of this extract, Amina presents the principal’s opposing voice, reminding the girls that it is the principal and teachers, as masters and gatekeepers, who decide when and how the student accomplishes her endeavour to “finish” *hifth*. By setting the demands for each daily recitation, the student’s teacher and the principal control the student’s rate of progress, while certain criteria for the student’s performance, including the accuracy and fluency of her recitation, are set globally. The girls’ attempts to set their own pace of learning potentially conflict with the principal’s and teachers’ pace-setting, and control of students’ rate of progress. Despite their desire to set their own pace of learning in co-operation with their peers, participants are aware of the school’s preferred pace of learning based on the projected learning trajectory. Constructing students’ learning trajectories as journeys, Zainab is critical of some of the teachers who “just look at the straight road” (Group interview, 27/08/12), or focus on a single, ideal route to accomplishment. As I have already suggested (see Chapter 4), students’ actual learning trajectories may be quite different.

“HOW? Easy!!!”

In a document aimed at first year students and their parents, the school administration sets the target for the first year of study as the memorisation of seven *ajzaa* and outlines how students would achieve this target (see Appendix 4). Over the course of the first three months, students are taught how to read the Classical Arabic of the Qur'an and how to recite the Qur'an accurately and fluently according to the rules of *tajweed*. Over the following three terms, they are required to memorise a certain number of *ajzaa* each term, the length of text to be memorised gradually increasing as they progress. The document is structured around a series of questions and answers emphatically addressing how these goals are achievable. The capitalisation of the questions (“HOW?”) and the use of multiple exclamation marks after the answers (“Easy!!!”) draws the reader's attention to this structuring of the text. While the ideal reader's (the first year student's) final question is the most insistent (“HOW!!!”), the writer's (the teacher's) final answer humorously matches the final question in emphasis (“EASY!!!”). Thus, the writer insists that these targets are achievable through the student's gradually increasing effort, or memorisation.

The school administration measures the school's success by the number of students who successfully complete *hifth* each year. It is, thus, in their interest to construct success at *hifth* as “easy”, or achievable. Each year, however, some students do not continue their studies and withdraw from the school. Thus, success at *hifth* is not inevitably achievable. The construction of *hifth* as “easy” further suggests that *hifth* is not difficult. However, this construction is contradicted by the note to students on the “Daily Timetable” which is printed on the front of the “First Year Targets” in which the school administration expresses the wish that “ALLAH (SWT) MAKE IT EASY ON YOU INSHA-ALLAH!!!” (see Appendix 3). It is also contradicted by participants' accounts of how demanding and stressful they often experienced *hifth* to be. These accounts contrast sharply with assumptions about “rote” learning, or memorisation, as “mindless”, or undemanding and mechanical, rather than cognitively challenging and taxing (cf. Wagner & Lotfi, 1983). Participants do not take up this construction of *hifth* as “easy”; on the contrary, they construct *hifth* as “not easy” (Interview with Amina, 14/08/12) and at times “very hard” (Interview with Fatima, 31/07/12).

The girls recalled siblings, friends or past teachers telling them that *hifth* would not be an “easy task” (Zainab's questionnaire, 19/07/12), but would be difficult or “very hectic” (Interview with

Fatima, 30/07/12) before they enrolled at the school. Each of them, however, described her surprise at experiencing difficulties in her learning and contrasted her perceptions of *hifth* prior to enrolling at the school to her changing perceptions of *hifth* over the course of her studies. In the following extract, Fatima considered her own perceptions of *hifth* prior to and after undertaking *hifth* for about six months at the school.

Extract 7

A lot of people think that *hifth* is like so easy, but it's not because you're using your brain the whole time . and it's very – a lot of hard work – it's much more harder than school and I didn't think it would be like that. (Individual interview, 30/07/12)

Fatima distances herself from the perception of “a lot of people”, or those Muslims who are not undertaking (or have not already completed) *hifth*, that *hifth* is “so easy”. She contrasts this perception with the *hifth* student's experience of “using your brain the whole time” and emphasises how much “hard work” or effort *hifth* requires. Nevertheless, Fatima draws a similarity between herself and those Muslims who are not undertaking *hifth* by switching to the past tense and the use of first person at the end of this speech. By so doing, she positions herself as no longer like “a lot of people” who may be dismissive of the demands of *hifth* on students, but as someone who has since gained access to this community of practice and now shares an insider's knowledge of what *hifth* is like: that it involves “a lot of hard work” and is “harder than school”.

Difficulties: “You just feel like giving up”

Each of the participants described experiences of intense frustration and disappointment during their studies, and identified periods when she no longer wanted to continue *hifth*. They detailed the cognitive difficulties and demands of *hifth* that lead to these experiences. Fatima reported that her first six months at the school had been “going very well” (Individual interview, 30/07/12). However, she immediately qualified that statement by acknowledging that “sometimes it [*hifth*] is a bit frustrating when you can't get it [the text] in your head and you're like trying the whole time” (Individual interview, 30/07/12). At these times, Fatima suggested, students would “sometimes get that feeling that you don't want to do this [*hifth*] anymore” (Individual interview, 30/07/12). “That feeling”, she seemed to suggest, would have been specific and familiar to all students when their desire to continue *hifth* waned. Amina also suggested that all students “go through those patches” (Individual interview, 14/08/12) when they no longer wanted to continue *hifth*. She recounted how at times students would “just feel

like giving up” (Individual interview, 30/07/12) because they felt that *hifth* was too difficult for them, and detailed a particular period when she had memorised 22 *ajzaa*, but had wanted to leave the school before she had completed her *hifth*. Zainab said that she had often needed her sister’s support to motivate her to continue over the course of her studies. Like Amina, she had also wanted to leave the school before she had completed her *hifth* and had gone as far as applying to one of the high schools before reconsidering and deciding to remain at the school. As she had progressed in her studies, Amina had experienced more difficulties in memorising the Qur’an as the extent of her revision steadily increased. Zainab identified similar difficulties with her revision, as well as with the memorisation of “*mutashabihahs*” [*mutashabihat* or lines in the Qur’an which are very similar thus easily confused] (Individual interview, 31/07/12).

In the following extract, participants describe their embodied responses to not succeeding in memorising and reproducing what is required, even after much effort. Amina had earlier said that others’ negative evaluations of a student’s progress “sometimes puts you down” (Group interview, 27/08/12), a metaphorical construction which Zainab then took up. At this point in the discussion, Fatima is again drawing on this construction to describe the disappointment of falling behind peers.

Extract 8

Fatima: And I think, *nuh* [Colloquial expression] it [failing to recall lessons set for a particular day] does a real thing to your – to your day – like your emotions that day – say, for example, you go to school and you think you know all your work, *nuh*, and you don’t know it –

Zainab: Ja!

Fatima: Then it just pulls you – your whole body like just goes into this –

Zainab: Oh, you feel like you want to cry!

Fatima: This like depression! [Laughs]

Amina: I go sleep if that happens.

Fatima: Because you like – or especially like if you thought that you knew you were gonna do it and you learnt very hard and then you’re disappointed in yourself and, “Why can’t I do better?” And it like just brings everything down – your self-esteem and everything. (Group interview, 27/08/12)

Failure to accurately recall and recite lessons set for a particular day, Fatima emphatically suggests, affects a student’s “emotions that day”. Students’ experience of failure in daily recitations is metaphorically constructed as a weight which physically “pulls you – your whole body” and “brings everything down – your self-esteem and everything”. All of the girls suggest that a student’s frustration and disappointment at her lack of progress also takes a physical

expression – Fatima describes how her “whole body like just goes into this – this like depression!”, Zainab suggests that she might cry and Amina says that she would choose to sleep – and that the effort that they make is at times exhausting. By emphasising that lack of progress affects students’ “self-esteem” and “everything”, Fatima further suggests that a students’ dissatisfaction with her performance in class on a particular day also affects her confidence in successfully completing *hifh*. Consider too Fatima’s crumpled facial expression when she has a “doubt” or cannot recall the following line during her recitation (see Figure 2). The naming of this error in recitation as a “doubt” suggests the greater doubt over successful completion of *hifh* which Fatima describes.

Despite detailing these difficulties, as well as the anxiety over achieving the goals of *hifh* which they produce, all of the participants resisted constructing their experiences of *hifh* around the opposition between difficulty and effortlessness or simplicity. Instead, the girls co-constructed *hifh* as “more challenging than difficult” (Group interview, 27/08/12). The former description hides the negative connotations of the latter. Moreover, the school magazine includes the *hadith*: “One who is well versed in the Qur’an will be in the company of those angels who are scribes, noble and righteous; and one who falters in reading the Qur’an, and has to exert hard for learning, gets double the reward” (School magazine published in November 2012). Thus, the student’s difficulties in her Qur’anic literacy learning are legitimated and valorised.

Endurance: “Sticking it out”

All of the participants position themselves and each other as successful *hifh* students. By midyear 2012, Fatima’s teacher had already recognised Fatima as becoming *haafithah* by referring to her as “three *juz hafith* [*haafithah*]” (Teacher’s comment written in Fatima’s “*dhor* book”). Thus, speaking for the group, Fatima refers to herself and the others as already “*hafith*”, anticipating their successful completion of *hifh* (Group interview, 27/08/12). As participants learn how to be successful *hifh* students, they take up a preferred affective orientation to Qur’anic literacy learning that constitutes successful learning as endurance or perseverance. Thus, successful *hifh* students are constituted as those who are “sticking it out” (Group interview, 27/08/12) or “persevering” (Interview with Amina, 14/08/12) with their studies in the face of exhaustion, frustration and distraction. This construction implies that *hifh* is unenjoyable and that the daily demands of *hifh* have to be endured in order to achieve the transformation associated with *hifh* and the ultimate goal of earning a place in *Jannah*.

Consider the following extract from a group interview. Directly prior to this exchange, Zainab had described the pressure she felt under to “finish” her *hifth* to which Amina had responded, “You don’t know the half of it” (Group interview, 27/08/12). Amina had asked Zainab how far she had progressed in her studies and, upon hearing that Zainab had memorised up to the 21st *juz*, Amina had repeated this statement and taken the floor to describe her own experiences. These she prefaced with the emphatic assertion that “when it comes to the end [of *hifth*], everyone pressurises you” (Group interview, 27/08/12). Here she explains why she said that.

Extract 9

Amina: Because if I think about it . my family, they’re so irritating – they work on my nerves – I can’t take it! But no, seriously, man, like my aunties they’ll go on whole time, “When – now, *waneer maak jy klaar?*” [Afrikaans, “When are you finishing?”]

Fatima: Uhh.

Amina: And that question – irritates me!

Researcher: And how do you deal with that?

Amina: Then it’s like – then I just . . . [Makes an angry sound and clenches fists] and I . . . [Closes her mouth and gestures with her hand as if turning a key in front of her mouth] because you’re gonna say something wrong . . .

Fatima: [Laughs]

Amina: Keep your mouth [shut] rather . . .

Fatima: Uhh.

Amina: Because I – because Sheikh –

Fatima: Because they [those not undertaking *hifth*] don’ know how it [the experience of undertaking *hifth*] is, but they’re quick to ask.

Amina: Ye-

Zainab: Ja.

Amina: Like – like her son, he started – my cousin – he started, then he was like only did a couple of *juz* and then he just . it just . disappeared . and he just . didn’t go to *hifth* school any more – and now she’s like . always with me and my mommy, you know now, “*Waneer maak sy klaar?*” [Afrikaans, “When is she finishing?”] And, “How much more you got? You’re taking forever” and all this stuff . Now that sometimes puts you down.

Fatima and Zainab: Mm. [Agree]

Amina: Because like even with my mommy . “Now, when are you finishing?” And my sister and my brother then it’s like you just *sommer* [Afrikaans, “quite”] feel like giving up and say . like . “Here, you do it” – like that.

Zainab: Mm. (Group interview, 27/08/12)

As the most advanced student of the three girls and having attended the school the longest, Amina positions herself as the most knowledgeable of the three girls. She is able to draw on both the religious knowledge that she has acquired through *hifth* and the insider’s detailed knowledge of the experience of undertaking *hifth* at this school. Moreover, Amina is the oldest of the group. Thus, the rules of social interaction which are set down in the *adaab* [“good”

conduct] syllabus favour Amina in this particular social context. Students are taught that “it is better to observe silence in the presence of those who are higher in rank, knowledge or perhaps more aged than you. It is of proper character that you pay heed to their speech by lending your faculties of hearing and sight to the message delivered” (Worksheet given to first year students on *adaab*). Throughout this extract, Zainab and Fatima recognise the legitimacy of Amina’s reported experiences by agreeing with her. Both of the girls give Amina the floor; only Fatima interrupts once. This interjection again sets up a difference between “us” and “them”: those, like the participants, who are undertaking or have already completed *hifth* and those who “don’t know how it [*hifth*] is” (cf. Extract 7). Knowledge is constructed as shared experience.

During the group interviews, Amina was often the first to respond to my questions (cf. Extracts 5 & 6). Although Fatima was recognised as the “smart” (Group interview, 27/08/12) student in the group by Zainab and sometimes took longer turns at speaking than Amina, she had attended the school for less than a year so was less knowledgeable than Amina. Moreover, as the only one in the group who had entered the *hifth* competition for girls and women which was hosted by a local mosque for the first time that year, Amina positions herself as the student with access to valued “new” information. Thus, among many of her peers, including the girls in this study, as well as adolescent Muslim friends not undertaking *hifth* and non-Muslim friends, Amina is able to position herself more powerfully as knowledgeable student and Muslim. She uses this knowledge and experience to resist others positioning her as a “stupid” (Group interview, 27/08/12) or “slow” student. However, in social interactions with family members and relatives, such as those she describes in the extract above, the same rules of communication favour those older than Amina. In these interactions, Amina struggles to position herself instead as a successful and soon-to-be-“finishing” *hifth* student.

Amina identifies her “aunties”, or female relatives’, often-repeated questions about the pace of her learning as an irritation. These questions are based on the assumption that *hifth* ought to be completed within a set time and at a preferred pace. Amina describes how the insistence of these questions and the negative evaluation that she is “taking forever”, or progressing too slowly at her *hifth*, lowers her self-esteem and motivation to “finish”. Her use of the phrase “puts you down” suggests that Amina recognises one of her aunt’s remarks as disparaging “put downs”. Amina makes use of non-verbal communication to express both her annoyance and agitation, and her management of these emotions. Thus, she momentarily closes her mouth and gestures with her hand as if turning a key in front of her lips. Students are taught “to always try

and maintain a pleasant disposition (manner) when addressing people. This can be achieved by remaining calm whilst speaking and smiling rather than attacking and frowning at them” (Worksheet given to first year students on *adaab*). Amina’s gesture reinforces that she is controlling her emotions and impulse to “say something wrong”. Moral discipline is constructed as control of emotion, impulse and speech in social interaction.

In undertaking *hifth*, students expect their efforts and achievements to be recognised by parents and members of the school community, as well as the broader Muslim community. These overlapping communities of practice often take much pride in their *huffaz* (cf. Moore, 2008; Gent, 2011). Students further anticipate that they will be socially affiliated with the imagined community of local and global *huffaz* or women and men “in high places already” (Interview with Zainab, 30/07/2012). Zainab’s comment suggests that *hifth* students desire the social status of these women and men, and hope to follow their desirable and out-of-the-ordinary life trajectories. Zainab’s use of metaphor further points to students’ ultimate desires and hopes for a future in *Jannah*.

Amina’s affective response to negative evaluation also suggests her anxiety about her lengthy withdrawal from mainstream schooling in order to complete her *hifth*. This anxiety points to Amina’s investment in her “secular” education and, as she hoped that she would one day “travel the world for free” (Group interview, 28/08/12) by working aboard a cruise ship, in the imagined community of young people working and travelling abroad. In an earlier individual interview, Amina pointed out that she, her brother and her sister had all started their schooling a year earlier than most other children (Interview, 30/07/12). Thus, she positions herself and her siblings as students of higher ability, ahead of their cohort. During this group interview, Amina changes the topic of the discussion to address the perception of “people” who “say... that... stupid children go to learn *hifth*” (Group interview, 27/08/12). Amina adamantly refutes this by repeating the assertion, “That is not true”. Amina’s exasperated and agitated response to the evaluation that she is “taking forever” suggests that she has a great affective investment in her identity as someone of higher ability and one of the “smart children here at this school” (Group interview, 27/08/12), as well as someone who is both literally and figuratively “going places”.

Amina contrasts her cousin’s failure to “finish” his *hifth* to her “persevering” (Individual interview, 14/08/12) in her own studies. Perseverance is constructed as preferable to “giving up” or withdrawal from *hifth*.

Transformation: “The Qur’an changes you”

During my first interview with Amina, she attempted to describe her brother’s transformation through *hifth* and explain to me how she had been inspired by it.

Extract 10

It [her brother’s completion of *hifth*] actually inspired me because I saw the way he came back . because like this type of life was new to him because he was *mos* [Afrikaans, “you know”] now very – what’s the word? [Pause] I can’t get to the word now . but he was very, almost like a [sic] introvert after that because like he didn’t have the life that we – that I had – *mos* now in a normal [mainstream] school and stuff like that, so he was very closed up and he was very . shy and he never used to speak a lot, so he didn’t exactly like speak much about it, but it changed him and I saw the way he acted afterwards like he was very . how can I say this? It’s almost like the Qur’an changes you – it makes you a better person. (Individual interview, 30/07/12)

Amina constructs her brother’s transformation as the result of his Qur’anic schooling (as a boarder at the school) or “this type of life” which was a withdrawal both from mainstream schooling and home life. She suggests that her brother had become “almost like a [sic] introvert”, “very closed up” and “shy”. Although these descriptions could carry negative connotations, Amina nevertheless identifies her brother’s transformation as positive – as making him “a better person”. When I asked Amina if she would still describe her brother as shy, she said that he was “still very, very shy and he’s like twenty years old!” Amina seems to suggest here that her brother’s shyness is inappropriate to his age. Later in the same interview, Amina again drew attention to how seldom her brother spoke.

Extract 11

The thing is, what I also liked about it – about him doing *hifth* – is, when he did – when he spoke, he spoke words of wisdom and he never spoke like when he wasn’t spoken to and he never spoke unnecessary, like you know people chatter-chatter-chatter-chatter. They like to go on on [sic] the wrong things, so . it inspired me also to be a better person, in character as well . so . [Laughs] (Individual interview, 30/07/12)

Amina contrasts her brother’s reticence and “words of wisdom” to others’ “chatter” about “the wrong things”. Again moral discipline is constructed as the control of speech in social interaction (cf. Extract 9). By drawing on the concept of *adaab*, Amina is able to construct her brother’s identity and actions as morally disciplined. All of the students are taught about the “good character” of the Prophet (Worksheet given to first year students on *adaab*). In the first year *adaab* syllabus, the “etiquette of speech” is the longest and most detailed of all the lessons. The worksheet states that it is “essential that you do not over indulge in speech except if you are

answering, giving *naseegah* [religious advice or counsel], enjoining what is good, forbidding what is evil or propagating the *deen* [religion, Islam] of Allah" (Worksheet given to first year students on *adaab*). Students are warned against "indulging" or "overindulging in talk" a number of times in this text. Moreover, they are taught to refrain from certain types of speech, including "mindless chatter and idle talk which has no benefit" (Worksheet given to first year students on *adaab*).

Amina distances herself from those "people" and their "chatter". Her overlexicalisation in describing her brother ("he was very, almost like a [sic] introvert", "he was very closed up", "he was very . shy", "he never used to speak a lot", "he didn't exactly like speak much about it") contrasts sharply with her brother's silence in this extract. Amina took the most turns at speaking in all of the group interviews. She also contributed the most by far during the individual interviews. However, she does not identify her talk as "overindulgent". On the contrary, Amina makes use of a wide range of linguistic and symbolic resources in order to construct a complex individual identity and to position herself favourably within the group. These resources include her humour, "rebelliousness" (Individual interview, 14/08/12), warmth and sociability, and her talkativeness. These are most often received positively by the other two girls.

During my second interview with Amina, I asked her to elaborate on how she thought the Qur'an had already changed her (Amina's wording and assertion).

Extract 12

Um . I think that, um, it's changed me quite a bit because I was very – oh my word – I was like the rebellious one – okay, I still am sometimes [Laughs], but I was the rebellious one and, uh, I used to be very naughty and, um, the Qur'an actually, like if – because when you read the Qur'an with sincerity and you read it with humility and, um... you read it from your heart and then it actually gives you that feeling of tranquillity, contentment and . peace – so you very – how can I say? – you're very calm and like after – after you finish reciting then it's like . "I feel so at ease with myself". like you know if – if you, um, under stress or if you going through a hard time you just read the Qur'an then it will help you – because that's what – it actually helped me because there was – like I used to go through a lot of tough times because – dealing with, um . my father's passing because that was like, *ja* . stone to the heart . so I had a very, very big problem dealing with that and like when you read the Qur'an and when you read, um, the – English – the transliteration – the translation – of what you've just read it actually – it's like Allah gave you that message – it's like you're supposed to read that, so that you could get that message and to tell you that it's gonna be okay and . you don't have to worry because he is in a better place and you have to go on with your life 'cause now – for a very long time I lived in the past and it was very, very hard for me to let go . and,

um, learning the Qur'an actually helped me with that 'cause it opened my eyes to a lot of things – there was a lot of things that I didn't know about my religion that I learned when I came to this school and, um, *ja* . (Individual interview, 14/08/12)

Amina positions herself as “rebellious” and “very naughty” before she undertook *hifh*. Historically, only boys were sent by their parents to undertake *hifh* at Qur'anic schools in Cape Town. These students were identified as “naughty” boys, those not excelling at school or those with no “secular” or other educational ambitions (*Muslim Views*, 1973: 3). Amina may be drawing on this construction of *hifh* schooling as reform schooling aimed at instilling discipline in “naughty” children. She describes her past identity, life experiences and emotional state in mainly negative terms which she contrasts to the *hifh* student's present identity or state and the effect of Qur'anic literacy practice on the reader or reciter.

The student's transformation through her engagement in Qur'anic literacy practices is described in terms of the immediate (and possibly impermanent or short-term) effect of reading aloud or reciting the Qur'an. Amina draws on the Islamic concepts of *salaam* [peace] and *ikhlaas* [sincerity] in these descriptions (cf. Gent, 2011). The effect of Qur'anic literacy practice on the reader or reciter of the text is described as “that feeling of tranquillity, contentment and . peace”. Engaging with the Qur'an with the “correct” orientation, which is “with sincerity”, “with humility” and “from your heart”, leads to this transformation in the reader or reciter. Thus, the (written and recited) text as social agent acts on the reader or reciter. The Qur'anic literacy practitioner becomes “very calm”. Amina positions the text as far more powerful than readers and reciters, such as herself: the Qur'an actively helps readers and reciters who are in need of help, and it gives them “that feeling” and “that message”. She recalls that she “used to go through a lot of tough times” and “had a very, very big problem” attempting to cope with her father's death which she describes as a “stone to the heart”. Amina constructs her past self as someone who needed to be “helped” or comforted, who could not act or “go on with your life”, and was anxious or not “dealing with” her grief. She implies that she is no longer anxious and that she thinks and behaves differently (she has “let go”) (cf. Boyle, 2006).

Amina more often constructs herself as the passive participant and the Qur'an as the active participant in her descriptions of her engagement with the text. Thus, she asserts that the Qur'an “changed me”, “actually helped me” and “opened my eyes”. Similarly, she makes use of a number of passive constructions for the generic *hifh* student (the Qur'an “actually gives you that feeling”, “will help you” and “Allah gave you that message”). On the other hand, the *hifh*

student is also constructed as active participant in reading aloud or reciting the Qur'an (Amina uses the construction "you read" a number of times). Although she foregrounds her relative lack of knowledge before she began attending the school ("there was a lot of things that I didn't know about my religion"), Amina emphasises the knowledge that she has gained since ("I learned [a lot of things that I didn't know about my religion] when I came to this school"). Thus, she concludes by constructing herself as active and agentic, and more knowledgeable and spiritually aware since she began *hifh* at the school.

Amina: "A long story"

At the outset of my first interview with Amina, she had said that it was "so embarrassing" to say that she had been attending the school for "so long" [seven years] (Individual interview, 30/07/12). When I asked her to explain why she had said that, Amina did not directly address the question. Instead, she suggested why the duration of her studies at the school was not important.

Extract 13

Because like . I was – I've been here so long, but the thing is that like everyone tells you that it's not how long you take because it's a good thing that you're doing and that you shouldn't worry because, when you done with this, this is one of your greatest achievements and when you go to [mainstream] schools it'll be . like chips for you, but, um . Ja, so I hope matric is going to be easy for me next year, *Insha'Allah*. (Individual interview, 30/07/12)

By switching to second person, Amina suggests that all students are told not to be anxious about how long they may take to complete their *hifh*. "Everyone" is quoted in indirect speech which comprises a number of categorical statements constructed in present tense. The voice of "everyone" asserts that "it's not how long you take", "it's a good thing that you're doing", "this is one of your greatest achievements" and "when you go to [mainstream] schools it'll be . like chips for you". Thus, successfully completing matric would be "easy" for successful *hifh* students. These statements are presented as truth and certainty. The voice of "everyone" has a social authority which is lacking from Amina's own voice at the end of this speech which is far more tentative. Note that Amina does not complete an important part of her first sentence. It seems likely that she would have contradicted these assertions, if she had. When she resumes speaking, however, Amina speaks with a far greater degree of uncertainty than "everyone" she initially quoted. Switching back to first person, Amina emphasises that it is her "hope" that she

will successfully complete her matric without any difficulties. Amina's use of the Arabic phrase, "*Insha'Allah*", further adds to the degree of uncertainty in her voice as she indicates that it is her hope that Allah has willed future achievement and success for her life.

Amina later contradicted her assertion here that "everyone" told students that the duration of their *hifh* was not important (cf. Extract 9). Moreover, Amina's brother's experience of resuming his mainstream education after completing *hifh* contradicts the assertion that successfully completing matric is "easy" for successful *hifh* students. Achieving the required point score for enrolment in the university courses he wished to take was not "easy" for Amina's brother.

During my second interview with Amina, I asked her if she thought that the decision to undertake *hifh* was her own or that of her mother. Amina again made use of personal narrative (cf. Extracts 12 & 13) to describe how she came to be at the school.

Extract 14

Um, okay, this is going to be a long story – joking! [Laughs] But, um, it's – how can I say? – it was my decision to come and learn *hifh* because . I was eight years old when I decided I wanted to do this, but then my mother was like sceptical and saying I'm too young and all this things and then she, um, she didn't want to send me. Then when I was – I was like – I turned eleven, *ja* – then when I was eleven then she put me here. And then I still wanted to do it, but then . *ah*, you know, when you learning *hifh* – like from the outside, it's like you think . "Oh my word, it looks so easy", like "I can also do that" [Laughs] But then when you come here, it's a different story and it's a different ball game, so . when I came here and I saw – and I like checked the vibe and I saw what was going on and everything that you have to do and all the responsibilities afterwards and I was like . "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait" [Draws in breath] "Lemme rethink my decision here" [Laughs] Because, um – so afterwards then it came – I think I was like two years here and then I was like, "*Yoh*" [Colloquial expression of disbelief] . . – but you go through those patches, like . "I don't want to do this anymore", "I just want to go back to normal school", "It's too hard" and it's like . and then I didn't want to do it anymore and then my mommy was like . "No, you just have to do it" . because I was like, I think I was 22 *juz* and then I wanted to leave [Laughs] and then I didn't want to stay and then they were like . "Don't be stupid, like "Just stay because it's like you have eight left" and . and then my mommy said I can't leave until I finish because if she's gonna let me leave then I'm not gonna finish anything else in my life . and I think that, um, when she said that . It took – I took a knock, but . myself – to my, um, my ego, but, *ja* . it went in my head and I was like, "That is actually true" because, if I had to leave and I didn't finish my *hifh*, then what would I finish – what else would I complete? 'Cause like . then it would just be . you think it's too hard and then I just leave . in our family . so I was actually grateful to my mommy for doing that so, um, if you persevere and you stick through it . . [Sighs]

Insha'Allah Allah will help you and show you the right . and then you will be more . content with your decision . (Individual interview, 14/08/12)

Amina recalls her mother “saying I’m too young” to undertake *hifth* when Amina was eight years old (despite enrolling Amina’s brother at the school when he was the same age). Amina foregrounds her age and, by indirectly quoting her mother in the present tense, her mother’s particular view thereof. Amina constructs her mother with predominantly verbal and material processes, while she constructs herself with largely mental processes. Thus, while Amina emphasises that “it was my decision to come and learn *hifth*” and “I decided I wanted to do this [*hifth*]”, she recounts that her mother “put” or enrolled her at the school. Amina’s mother is the active agent. Amina traces her ambivalent desire to continue *hifth*; she reports that she “wanted to do this” before she began attending the school, but began to “go through those patches” after she began attending the school when she felt uncertain about continuing her studies. Although she quotes her responses during these periods (“Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait”, “Lemme rethink my decision here”, “*Yoh*”), Amina does not address this direct speech clearly at anyone so it likely comprises Amina’s thoughts rather than speech. Thus, Amina does not indicate that she has been heard by others. Moreover, in reporting the spoken interaction between herself and her mother at a time when she had wanted to withdraw from the school, Amina only implies that she told her mother that she “didn’t want to do it [*hifth*] anymore”. In contrast to this, Amina makes use of both direct and indirect speech to quote her mother’s responses (““No, you just have to do it”, “my mommy said I can’t leave until I finish”). These commands are clearly directed at Amina. Similarly, Amina does not identify by name who “they” are, but she quotes the commands they direct at her (““Don’t be stupid”, “Just stay because it’s like you have eight left”), thus constructing their voices with far greater force and social authority than her own.

Amina suggests that she could not withdraw from the school except if her mother “let” her do so or gave her permission. Again, Amina’s mother is the active agent who has the social authority to grant or withhold permission. Amina recounts that she “took a knock . to my . ego” upon hearing why her mother would not permit her to withdraw from the school (“because if she’s gonna let me leave then I’m not gonna finish anything else in my life”). However, she takes up this construction as “true”. Amina constructs the failure to complete *hifth* as the failure of perseverance and achievement, and as a personal and complete failure. Moreover, Amina’s rhetorical question suggests the tension around the contradictory conceptions of *hifth* as “easy”

and “hard”; Amina seems to imply that, if she does not complete this “easy” task, she will not be successful at future “hard” endeavours.

Amina laughs a number of times during this extract, including at her own and others’ perceptions of *hifth* “from the outside” that “it looks so easy”. She implies that she now has an insider’s knowledge and experience of *hifth* as a legitimate peripheral participant in this community of practice. Thus, she contrasts these perceptions with the *hifth* student’s experience that “it’s a different story and it’s a different ball game” and assertion that “‘It’s too hard’”. This latter assertion Amina further contrasts with the preferred orientation to the demands of *hifth* in which the *hifth* student perseveres when “you think it’s [*hifth* is] too hard”. From the position of successful and soon-to-be-“finishing” *hifth* student, Amina laughs at her desire to withdraw from the school after memorising up to the 22nd *juz*, implying that she now agrees with “them” that this was “stupid”.

Amina constructs her final sentence in more impersonal second person. The inclusion of the conditional clause (“if you persevere and you stick through it”), Amina’s non-verbal communication (her sigh) and the use of the Arabic phrase (“*Insha’Allah*”) all contradict the certainty of her final statement (“Allah will help you and show you the right . and then you will be more . content with your decision .”). Instead, these suggest that Amina is not always comfortable with her “decision” to undertake *hifth*. Moreover, this final conditional sentence in the future tense suggests that Amina’s “long story” is not finished, but is ongoing.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown participants’ investment in the *hifth* process and in “finishing” *hifth*. In identifying with each other and with their similar journeys, the girls recognise and construct themselves and each other as legitimate peripheral participants joining the community of practice together. However, they struggle with the tension between positioning themselves and others’ attempts to position them differently. I have focused on Amina in this chapter and shown how she struggles to claim the right to a particular social identity, that of successful *hifth* student and knowledgeable Muslim, and to resist other identities imposed on her, particularly that of “stupid” student. Amina is not always able to achieve the “right to speak” and “impose reception” (Bourdieu, 1991). However, she is both subject to and subject of unequal relations of power in a range of social interactions within specific contexts (Norton,

2000). All three of the girls negotiate unequal social relations in a range of social interactions within the institutional setting of their school, as well as at home.

I have argued that participants take up a preferred affective orientation to the cognitive difficulties and demands of *hifh*. Successful Qur'anic literacy learning is constructed as endurance or perseverance in order to achieve the transformation associated with *hifh* and the ultimate goal of earning a place in *Jannah*. As they are "sticking it out" (Group interview, 27/08/12) or "persevering" (Interview with Amina, 14/08/12) with their studies, all of the girls position themselves and each other as successful *hifh* students becoming *haafithaat*.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Overview of the study

This small-scale case study focused on the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifth* as it is practised at a Qur'anic school in Cape Town. The research aimed to identify the language and literacy practices of *hifth* at this school, as well as investigate how selected girls orient themselves to these practices. The fieldwork was undertaken over two school terms at the girls' campus of a Qur'anic school in the city. It focused on three senior students undertaking *hifth* at this school, each of whom was in a different class and at a different stage of her *hifth*. Individual and group interviews were conducted with these students. The data set included field notes taken during classroom observations, transcripts of interviews with the participants, and physical artefacts, including one participant's copy of the Qur'an. As a case study, the empirical findings cannot be generalized. However, theoretical implications can be drawn, as explored in the reflections below.

The theoretical framework for this research is drawn from New Literacy Studies (NLS) (cf. Heath, 1983; Street, 1984), communities of practice (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and a poststructuralist approach to literacy and identity (cf. Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Using these lenses enabled me to identify the language and literacy practices that constitute *hifth* at this school, as well as describe and interpret participants' identifications and investments in their literacy practices.

Following Brandt and Clinton (2002), local Qur'anic literacy practices are located in the broader context of global practices. I have theorised how literacy artefacts, such as the written Qur'an, connect this local school community and its literacy practices to other places across the country and the world, and to Qur'anic literacy practices there.

Approaching the written Qur'an as multimodal artefact (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), I have theorised the transcontextualizing potential of the written text (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Selected pages of the text were analysed as teaching and learning material, and as the collaborative product of both teachers and students.

I have theorised how the participants join a community of practice (that of the school community) by collaboratively constructing a shared identity as legitimate peripheral participants in this community. Although each of the girls in this study was at a different stage of

her *hifth*, each recognised that all were mutually engaged in the joint enterprise of the memorisation of the Qur'an. Through their participation in Qur'anic literacy practices, they were developing shared ways of talking about their situated learning activities that marked their group identity as members of a community of practice.

Taking a poststructuralist approach to literacy and identity, I have analysed how the girls construct their participation in this community, as well as the identities they are taking up through their participation. I have shown that they are positioned more and less powerfully in different social interactions in particular social contexts. Drawing on the concepts of investment (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) and imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003), I have discussed participants' multiple identifications and investments in their social identities and practices.

Reflections on the findings

The data reveal multiple languages and registers being used in the classroom. These include colloquial English and Afrikaans, as well as Urdu, Malay and Arabic. The sounds of Classical Arabic are heard throughout the school. The language of the Qur'an and the Qur'an, as recited and written text, are accorded high status in this school community.

The most prominent language and literacy practices identified were: reading, reciting and listening to the Qur'an in Arabic (in Arabic script); memorising the Qur'an in Arabic in Arabic script; and knowing and understanding the routine social and religious practices at this school and in the broader Muslim community. Although *hifth* is presented as "all about reading (i.e. reciting)" (Teachers' guide to the school's "memorisation methodology"), all three of the girls were quite ambivalent about extending their participation in the practice of reciting the Qur'an, particularly before a broader audience, and about the evaluation of their performance that this entailed.

The school makes use of a range of teaching materials produced both locally and internationally. Literacy artefacts, such as the series of textbooks on *tajweed* published in Saudi Arabia, shape local teaching and learning practices at this school. However, teachers at this school mediate the use of these texts.

I found that the girls were actively involved in a range of *hifth* related literacy practices both at school and at home. At this school, the students are expected to memorise the Qur'an after

school hours. As the focus of this investigation was on school literacy practices, this practice was not observed. Instead, I made use of interview data to examine how the girls constructed their experiences of *hifth*. Each of them described the cognitive effort that was required to accurately memorise the Qur'an, while retaining recall of an increasingly longer part of the text. Their accounts contrast sharply with assumptions about memorisation or "rote" learning as "mindless" or undemanding and mechanical, rather than cognitively challenging and taxing.

The girls devote most of the day to reading aloud and reciting the Qur'an, thereby committing the entire text to memory and becoming *haafithaat*. Students learn how to read or decode the Classical Arabic of the Qur'an and how to recite the Qur'an with *tajweed*, as well as what constitutes the "correct" or appropriate orientation in their engagement with both the written and recited Qur'an.

As "code-breakers" (Freebody, 1992), the girls learn how to engage with the Arabic script by relating spoken sounds to the written symbols of Arabic. They also learn the written conventions of Arabic script, such as learning that the text is read from right to left and from the top to the bottom of the page. They learn to relate the layout of the page to layout conventions already encountered, such as how the main body of a text is usually printed across the middle of the page, while text that is placed in the margins of the page is often supplementary to the body of the text (see Appendix 8) (cf. Street, 1984). Students' proficiency at decoding the Arabic text may vary (cf. Rosowsky, 2013). Some students may rely more on familiarity with the text in a specific copy of the Qur'an in order to reproduce the spoken sounds of the text (cf. Street, 1984; Moore, 2008). Thus, the decoding of the Qur'an encompasses a range of practices.

As "text-users" (Freebody, 1992), students learn through their engagement in teaching and learning activities at school what counts as "reading" in the Qur'anic school context, as well as what counts as adequate and appropriate reading in that context. Thus, the girls learn that reciting the Qur'an with *tajweed* involves "correctly" and "fluently" reproducing the text from memory. They also learn their role in engaging with the Qur'an and how they are positioned relative to the teacher, the text and peers in the literacy events of the classroom. In recitation, the Qur'an as both written and recited text is central and constitutes the shared focus of reciter and listener (cf. Moore, 2008). Teachers demonstrate to students and authorise what counts as appropriate reading, reciting and listening in a range of social interactions in the classroom,

including the “monitoring” of students’ recitations. As students learn their role in the classroom, they increasingly take up this monitoring of their own and peers’ recitations.

Through their participation in these literacy practices, the girls were learning to take an appropriate embodied orientation in their engagement with the Qur’an as readers, reciters and listeners. Thus, they learn how to orient to the Qur’an “respectfully” during recitations because, as Allah’s literal words, the Arabic text is meaningful (cf. Moore, 2011). The embodied interaction between teacher and student during recitation involves body positioning and movement, gaze and facial expression. The memorisation of the Qur’an further requires embodied effort, as evidenced in the postures taken up by students when reciting, rocking back and forth or from side to side, and the physical exhaustion reported.

As individual Muslims undertake *hifth* on behalf of the whole Muslim community (Gent, 2013), local participants’ endeavours at undertaking *hifth* are further oriented towards the global Muslim community. These endeavours are sponsored by the broader Muslim community. The fees at this school are very low and students whose parents cannot pay for their schooling may be sponsored. Sponsored students may be under an obligation to complete their *hifth* at the school. However, the broader community may also be under an obligation to the *huffaz*.

The girls were deeply invested in their language and literacy practices at this school. Although all of them described experiences of intense frustration and disappointment during her studies, all took up a preferred affective orientation to their Qur’anic literacy learning that constituted successful learning as endurance or perseverance. Although all three of them expressed a sometimes ambivalent desire to complete *hifth*, all identified themselves and each other as successful *hifth* students becoming *haafithaat*.

Appendix 1: Glossary of terms

The definitions of terms in this glossary are based on Bangstad (2004), Martin (2004), Mus (196?), Qureshi (2000) and Winstedt (1944). I have used the local spelling of these terms. Variations in the local spelling are included in round brackets. Transliterations of the terms are provided in square brackets.

Abaya – [Algerian Arabic *‘abaya*] long, loose over-garment most often black

Adaab – [Arabic *adab*] norms of behaviour, habits, equivalent to *sunna*, rules of conduct for a particular social group, “proper” conduct or refinement, moral formation. Underlying the concept is a notion of discipline, self-control and training. Here: “courtesy, respectful attention” (School brochure dated 2012-2014)

Allah – [Arabic *Allah*] God, the Unique One, the Creator

Al-Qur’an – [Arabic *al-qur’an*] the Qur’an as oral text

Asr solaah – [Arabic *salat al-‘asr*] one of the five obligatory daily prayers which is performed in the early afternoon

Ayah – [Arabic s. *ayah*, pl. *ayat*] line or verse of the Qur’an

Bacha – [Malay *bacha*] “to read or to recite prayers”. Here: to recite the Qur’an

Deen – [Arabic *din*] religion, obligations and prescriptions concerning acts of worship

Dhor – [Urdu *dohrana*] “to repeat or revise”. Here: revision of the Qur’anic text already memorised

‘Esha solaah – [Arabic *salat al-‘isha*] one of the five obligatory daily prayers which is performed in the evening

Fard ‘ayn – [Arabic *fard ‘ayn*] the individual’s obligation or duty

Fard kifayah [Arabic *fard kifaya*] a collective duty or obligation which, if fulfilled by a sufficient number of individuals, excuses the others in the community from fulfilling it

Fusha – [Arabic *fusha*] the “high” variety of Arabic. Refers to both Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

Gaatam – [Arabic *khatam al-Qur’an*] a social gathering held during Ramadan at which the recitation of the whole Qur’an is completed

Haafithah (s.), haafithaat (pl.) – [Arabic s. *hafiza*] the title given to a girl or woman who has memorised the entire Qur’an

Hadith – [Arabic *al-hadith*] collections of the Prophet Muhammad’s sayings, acts and teachings or his tacit approval of specific actions

Hafith (haafith) – [Arabic s. *hafiz*, pl. *huffaz*] the title given to a man or boy who has memorised the entire Qur'an

Harakat – [Arabic s. *haraka*, pl. *harakat*] the supplementary diacritics in Arabic script indicating a short vowel (a, i or u) following the letter

Haram – [Arabic *haram*] prohibited

Hifth (hifz, hifdh) – [Arabic *hifz*] the memorisation of the Qur'an

Ikhlāas – [Arabic *ikhlas*] sincerity. Here: "sincerity of intention" (School brochure dated 2012-2014)

Imaan – [Arabic *iman*] faith in Allah

Isti'adhah – [Arabic *isti'adha*] a brief recitation for protection from the evil influence of Satan

Jahannam – [Arabic *jahannam*] Islamic concept of Hell

Jannah – [Arabic *janna*] Islamic concept of Paradise

Jihad – [Arabic *jahada*] literally: "to strive or exert oneself" toward a goal, a virtuous struggle toward a praiseworthy goal

Juz (s.), ajzaa or juzes (pl.) – [Arabic s. *juz'*, pl. *ajza'*] one of thirty parts of roughly equal length into which the Qur'an is divided to facilitate recitation of the text in a month

Juz Ammah – [Arabic *Juz' Amma'*] the 30th part of the Qur'an, consisting of most of the shortest chapters. Children are generally taught this part first.

Juz Tabaraq – [Arabic *Juz' Tabaraq*] the 29th part of the Qur'an

Lagu – [Malay *lagu*] literally: "a tune or intoning". The musicality of the voice when reciting

Lahn jaliyy – [Arabic *lahn al-jali*] "clear errors" in Qur'anic recitation or those obvious to any Muslim thus considered major errors

Lahn khafiyy – [Arabic *lahn al-khafi*] "hidden errors" in Qur'anic recitation or those that are only obvious to those who have studied *tajweed* thus considered minor errors

Madrassah – [Arabic *madrasa*] religious school (institution or place of learning). Here: religious instruction classes or a school offering after-school religious instruction

Magrib solaah – [Arabic *salat al-maghrib*] one of the five obligatory daily prayers which is performed just after sunset

Makkah – [Arabic *Makkah*] Mecca in Saudi Arabia, considered the holiest city in Islam

Masjid Al-Haram – [Arabic *Masjid Al-Haram*] "The Holy Mosque" in Mecca

Muallimah – [Arabic *mu'allima*] a female teacher

Mushaf – [Arabic s. *mushaf*, pl. *masahif*] a printed copy of the Qur'an as a physical object, the written text

Mutashabihah – [Arabic *mutashabihat*] lines of the Qur'an which are not clear. Here: lines of the Qur'an which are very similar thus easily confused

Naseegah – [Arabic *naseeha*] religious advice. Here: "guidance, advice, [monitoring of] action and prompt response" (School brochure dated 2012-2014)

Qari (s.), Qurra (pl.) – [Arabic s. *qari*, pl. *qurra*] literally "a reader", a person who recites the Qur'an according to the rules of recitation, a person of a professional class of reciters

Qur'an – [Arabic *Qu'ran*] literally "the recitation". The central religious text of Islam

Sabaq – [Urdu *sabaq*] literally "a lesson". Here: the Qur'anic text to be memorised that day

Sabaq dhor – [Urdu] literally "revision". Here: revision of the Qur'anic text that was memorised the previous day

Salaam – [Arabic *salam*] peace

Sheikh (s.), shuyoogh (pl.) – [Arabic s. *shaykh*, pl. *shuyukh*] literally: "an elder or man over 50". The title given to the head of any group or religious institution as it connotes authority and prestige. Here: a learned man who has spent time in the Middle East and/or pursued religious higher education

Solaah – [Arabic *salat*] the ritual prayer

Sunnah – [Arabic s. *sunna*, pl. *sunan*] the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. Habit, norm, normative custom of the Prophet or the early community, orthodoxy

Surah – [Arabic s. *surah*, pl. *suwar*] chapter of the Qur'an

Tajweed (tajwid) – [Arabic *tajwid*] the set of rules determining the exact pronunciation of the Qur'an, including the pronunciation of the sounds of the language, intonation and pausing during recitation

Tamat – [Malay *tamat*, Arabic *tammam*] literally "to have finished a book or studies". Here: "finished" or having completed the memorisation of the entire Qur'an and revising the text. Also: "graduating"

Taraweeh (taraweeh solaah) – [Arabic *salat al-tarawih*] prayers performed only during Ramadan after the *isha'* prayer (the last of the five daily prayers) and lead by the *huffaz*, as well as boys or men undertaking *hifh*

Thur solaah – [Arabic *salat al-zuhr*] one of the five obligatory daily prayers which is performed at midday

Yassarnal Qur'an – [Arabic] literally "Easy to learn Qur'an". A locally published series of primers on Classical Arabic for beginners which introduces children to the Arabic alphabet

Appendix 2: Transcription conventions

...	A pause, each dot indicating a second
–	Abrupt transition in speech
Ye-	Speech abruptly cut short
“What happened to me?”	Reported speech or thought
Lemme	Contractions
<i>Yoh</i>	Interjections in colloquial language are given in italics.
[Laughs]	Explanations of movement, gesture, expression and sounds, such as “mm” and “uhh”, are given in square brackets.
[The principal]	Identification of people of whom participants speak is given in square brackets.
<i>Italics</i>	Afrikaans, Arabic, Malay and Urdu words are given in italics.
Sheikh, Allah	Arabic terms which have been incorporated into English are not italicised.
[Yes]	English translations of Afrikaans and Arabic words, phrases or sentences are given in square brackets after the word, phrase or sentence. Explanations of colloquial expressions are also given in square brackets after the words.
<u>underlined speech</u>	Words stressed by participants

Appendix 3: Daily timetable (Information sheet given to the parents of first year students)

DAILY TIMETABLE

Dear Parent

Please assist your child to adhere to this timetable. Children cannot be left alone, supervision should be provided at all times. Please make a copy for yourself and keep this copy in your child's room where she can see it at all times.

Shukran

TIME	ACTIVITY
04h00 – 06h30	Revision of new Sabaq/ Sabaq Dhor / Dhor
06h30 – 07h00	Breakfast & Prepare for School
07h30 – 08h30	New Lesson (Sabaq)
08h30 – 10h00	Sabaq Dhor
10h00 – 10h20	BREAK
10h20 – 12h45	Dhor
12h45 – 13h30	Break & Thur Solaah
13h30 – 14h00	Islamic Studies
14h00	DISMISSED FROM SCHOOL
After School until Asr Solaah	Eat, Rest, Sleep & Solaah
For 1 hour after Asr	Memorize Sabaq
1 hour	Play/ relax/ wash/ eat
1 hour before Magrib	Revise Sabaq Dhor
Magrib	Perform Magrib Solaah
Magrib till 'Esha	Dhor
'Esha	Perform 'Esha Solaah
After 'Esha Solaah	Sleep

ADHERING TO THIS TIMETABLE IS A KEY TO SUCCESS!!!

MAY ALLAH(SWT) MAKE IT EASY ON YOU INSHA-ALLAH!!!

Appendix 4: First year targets (Information sheet given to the parents of first year students dated 2009 and photocopied onto the back of the “Daily Timetable”)

FIRST YEAR TARGETS

Memorisation of 7 AJZAA

**From 12/01/09 to 15/04/09 Yassarnal Quraan
Part 1 & 2 & JUZ 30 (جزء عم ينسا علون)**

**From 17 April to 17 June start memorizing
Quraan.**

2 AJZAA IS REQUIRED.

HOW?

Easy!!!

Only 10 Lines new lesson daily!!!

From 11 July to 23 Sept.

3 AJZAA IS REQUIRED

HOW?

Easy!!!

Only 1 page new lesson daily!!!

From 2 Oct. to 25 November

2 AJZAA IS REQUIRED

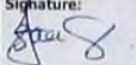

HOW!!!

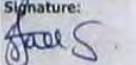

EASY!!!

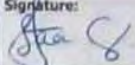

Only 1 Page new lesson daily

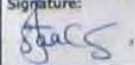

**24 Nov to 4 Dec, consolidate back
lessons**

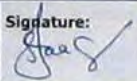
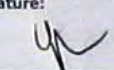
Appendix 5: Three pages from Zainab's "Daily Progress Monitoring Book" recording her progress during the week of 3/11/12 - 9/11/12

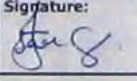

DAY: Sat		DATE: 03		MONTH: Nov.		
ITEM	WORK	SELF RECTIFIED	RECTIFIED	TAJWEED LEVEL	REMARK	LISTENER
New lesson	no sabaa ①					
Recent new lesson	PREV 18 TL ②				③	MI ③
Back lesson 1						
Back lesson 2						
Back lesson 3						
Teacher comment:				Signature: 		
Parent comment:				Signature: 		

DAY: Mon		DATE: 05		MONTH: Nov.		
ITEM	WORK	SELF RECTIFIED	RECTIFIED	TAJWEED LEVEL	REMARK	LISTENER
New lesson	no sabaa ④					
Recent new lesson	PREV 18 TL ④		✓		Fairly Fluent	MI ⑨
Back lesson 1	2/2 16 ⑥				Fluent	MI ⑨
Back lesson 2	2/2 14 ⑦				Fluent	MI ⑨
Back lesson 3	2/2 9 ⑦				Fluent	MI ⑨
Back lesson 3	2/2 20 ⑧				Fluent	Salimah
Teacher comment:				Signature: 		
Parent comment:				Signature: 		

DAY: Tue		DATE: 06		MONTH: Nov		
ITEM	WORK	SELF RECTIFIED	RECTIFIED	TAJWEED LEVEL	REMARK	LISTENER
New lesson	no sabaa ④					⑩
Recent new lesson	PREV 18 TL ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 1	2/2 17 ④				Fairly Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 2	2/2 14 ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 3	2/2 9 ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 3	2/2 2 ④				Fluent	Salimah
Teacher comment:				Signature: 		
Parent comment:				Signature: 		

DAY: Wed		DATE: 07		MONTH: Nov		
ITEM	WORK	SELF RECTIFIED	RECTIFIED	TAJWEED LEVEL	REMARK	LISTENER
New lesson	no sabaa ④					
Recent new lesson	PREV 18 TL ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 1	2/2 17 ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 2	2/2 14 ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 3	2/2 9 ④				Fluent	MI ⑩
Back lesson 3	2/2 2 ④				Fluent	Salimah
Teacher comment:				Signature: 		
Parent comment:				Signature: 		

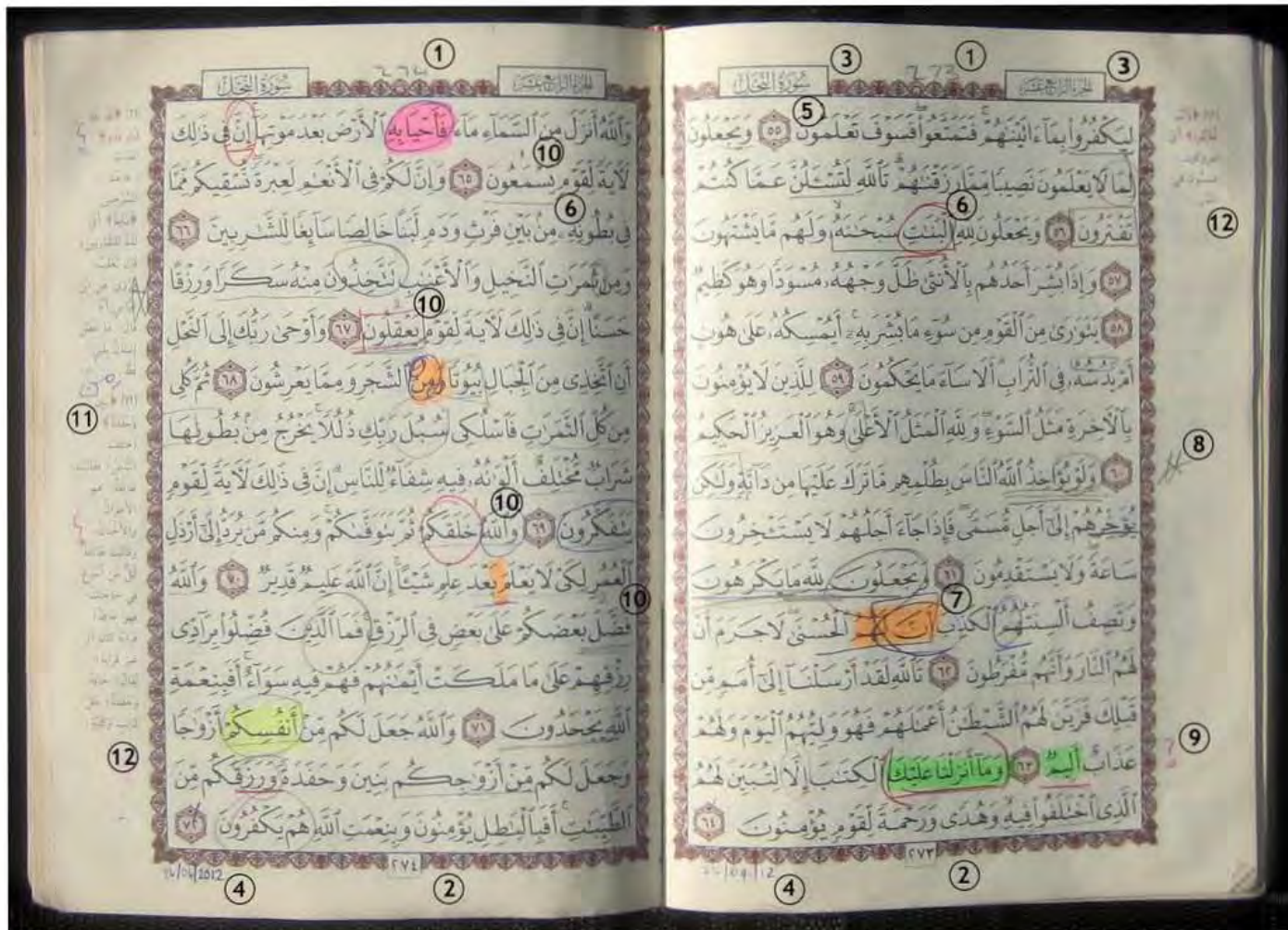
DAY: Thur		DATE: 08		MONTH: Nov.		
ITEM	WORK	SELF RECTIFIED	RECTIFIED	TAJWEED LEVEL	REMARK	LISTENER
New lesson	351 + 1/2 352	5			Fluent	M.I.
Recent new lesson	PreV 18 th L				Fluent (12)	M.I.
Back lesson 1	1/2 16 1/2 15				Fluent	Abdo M.I.
Back lesson 2	1/2 10 1/2 4				OK. (14)	Zainab H.
Back lesson 3	1/2 28				Fluent	Salmah
Teacher comment:				Signature: 		
Parent comment:				Signature: 		

DAY: Fri		DATE: 09		MONTH: Nov.		
ITEM	WORK	SELF RECTIFIED	RECTIFIED	TAJWEED LEVEL	REMARK	LISTENER
New lesson	2/2 352 353					M.I.
Recent new lesson	PreV 18 th L				(15)	
Back lesson 1	2/2 16 2/2 15				(15)	
Back lesson 2						
Back lesson 3						
Teacher comment:				Signature: 		
Parent comment:				Signature: 		

Appendix 6: Explanation of the three pages from Zainab's "Daily Progress Monitoring Book" recording her progress during the week of 3/11/12 - 9/11/12

1	Zainab had not been set a "new lesson" for Saturday, 3 November (recorded as "no <i>sabaq</i> ") as she had not demonstrated to her teacher that she could successfully recall and recite her "back lessons" on Friday, 2 November.
2	Thus, Zainab had to recite these "back lessons" again to her teacher. This recitation (recorded as "Prev 18 T/L") comprised that part of the 18 th <i>juz</i> which she had already or "previously" recited "till the [new] lesson" or that part which she had yet to recite.
3	Zainab's teacher (identified as "Ml." or " <i>mu'allima</i> ") recorded that Zainab "knew @ 2 nd attempt", indicating that Zainab required two attempts to succeed at this recitation.
4	The teacher had repeatedly set this lesson as her "recent" to be recited each day until she was satisfied that Zainab could accurately and fluently recite it. Thus, the teacher had not set Zainab any "new lessons" for the following three days.
5	Zainab had been set a "new lesson" (recorded as "351 + ½ 352") the length of one and a half pages, covering page 351 and the first half of page 352 of the Qur'an, for Thursday, 8 November.
6	"Back lessons" comprised five rounds of recitation. For each round, the teacher would set a part the length of half of one <i>juz</i> from each of five sections into which the <i>ajzaa</i> of the Qur'an were organised. Thus, a part from <i>juz</i> 16-20 and a part from <i>juz</i> 11-15 were set for the first "back lesson", a part from <i>juz</i> 6-10 and a part from <i>juz</i> 1-5 were set for the second "back lesson", and a part from <i>juz</i> 26-30 was set for the third "back lesson" (see examples here).
7	The first and second "back lessons" comprised two parts which were each the length of half of one <i>juz</i> ("1/2" indicating the first half of the <i>juz</i> and "2/2" indicating the second half of the <i>juz</i>) (see examples here).
8	The third "back lesson" comprised one part the length of half of one <i>juz</i> (see example here).
9	Each part of these "back lessons" was assessed by either the teacher or a peer, while the teacher always assessed recitation of the "new lesson" and "recent lesson" (see examples here).
10	On three days of this week, Zainab recited her "recent lesson" in three parts to two "listeners" (her teacher assessing the first two parts and a peer the third part) as it was a lengthy recitation (see example here).
11	On Tuesday, 6 November, Zainab had made three errors (recorded under "rectified" as "too many mist. [mistakes] repeat") during a recitation to her teacher. Thus, she had been set that part to recite again the following day.
12	When Zainab had not made any errors during a recitation, she had most often received the comment "fluent" (see examples here).
13	Peers had further recorded that her performance was "nice" (see examples here).
14	Peers had also recorded that her performance was "OK" (see examples here).
15	Zainab pointed out to me that there were days during this week when, for reasons she could no longer recall, she had not recited parts or lessons which she had been set for that day (recorded as "D.N.R." [did not read] on one such day) (see examples here).

Appendix 7: Two pages from the second half of *juz* 14 in Zainab's copy of the Qur'an which were included as a "back lesson" on 6/11/12



Appendix 8: Explanation of selected features of the two pages from the second half of *juz* 14 in Zainab's copy of the Qur'an which were included as a "back lesson" on 6/11/12

1	Zainab had written in pencil the page numbers as they are written in English ("273" and "274") at the top of each page. Students at this school are not taught Arabic numerals. Although Zainab had learnt these at her previous school, she preferred to write in the English numerals as she said it took her longer to decode the Arabic numerals.
2	The page numbers are printed at the bottom of each page as they are written in Arabic. The Arabic text on each page is read from right to left and from the top to the bottom of the page.
3	The name of the <i>surah</i> [chapter] is printed in Arabic at the top of each page.
4	Zainab and her teacher had written in the dates when each of these pages was to be recited as Zainab's "new lesson". Thus, Zainab recited page 273 to her teacher for the first time on "25/04/12" and page 274 on "26/04/2012".
5	Each <i>ayah</i> [line] is numbered and the Arabic numeral is printed within this symbol (see example here).
6	Since these pages were set and recited as "new lessons", Zainab has recited both pages a number of times as "back lessons". The "listeners" (including the principal, her teacher and peers) have marked the errors that Zainab has made during these recitations in a number of ways, including underlining, circling and bracketing those parts which have been recited inaccurately (see examples here).
7	Those "monitoring" or listening to these recitations have used a range of writing tools, including pencils, red and blue pens, and orange, green, pink and yellow highlighters (see examples here).
8	"Listeners" have also drawn Zainab's attention to repeated errors in a line by using symbols, such as stars, alongside the line in the margins of the page (see example here).
9	Zainab pointed out to me that her teacher had written question marks in the margins when she had not understood that part of Zainab's recitation (see example here).
10	Zainab's teacher has drawn Zainab's attention to two <i>mutashabihat</i> [<i>ayat</i> or lines which are very similar] on this page. The first is identified with a small number "1" written in pencil above each line and the second with a small number "2" written above each line.
11	The teacher had written in blue pen the <i>haraka</i> [diacritic in Arabic script that marks a short vowel] which Zainab had recited inaccurately/incorrectly in the margin alongside the line in which it appears.
12	Zainab disregarded the Arabic text which is printed in the outer margins of each page as she could not read the text.

Appendix 9: Written questionnaire

1. Biographical details: name, age, home language(s), family background, schooling
2. Before you began *hifth* yourself, did you know anyone who had completed *hifth*? If so, who were they and what advice and encouragement did they give you? Have they been involved in your study? (If so, in what ways?)
3. Have you used the Internet to search for information about *hifth* or to make contact with other students undertaking *hifth*? (Why or why not? If you have, can you tell me about it?)
4. Which school do you hope to attend after you have completed *hifth*? What do you think and feel about returning to mainstream school after *hifth*?
5. Do you plan to take your studies of the Qur'an and Islam further once you have completed *hifth*? If so, how do you plan to do this?
6. Do you hope to be a role model (and vicegerent) to other Muslims and non-Muslims? If so, in what ways?

Appendix 10: Individual interview questions

I had initially planned to undertake a comparative study of religious and “secular” literacy practices at the school hence the inclusion of questions relating to the school’s “secular” curriculum.

During the first round of individual interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on their prior mainstream schooling.

During the final round, all three of the participants were asked the following:

1. Why and how did you decide to undertake *hifth* at this school?
 - Was undertaking *hifth* your own decision?
 - Did others (parents, siblings or other family members, teachers, etc.) encourage or influence your decision?
 - Why this particular school?
 - What does it mean to you to undertake *hifth*?
2. Why did you decide to enrol in English and Maths classes at the school?
 - Was it your decision to do so? If it was your parents’ decision, why do you think they want you to attend these classes?
 - Why do you think so few girls attend these classes?

First session (30/07/12)

Amina

1. How did your brother’s experience of undertaking *hifth* inspire you to undertake *hifth* yourself?
2. How do you think your experience of undertaking *hifth* compares to those of your friends undertaking *hifth* in Egypt?
3. In what ways do you hope to “inspire young Muslim girls” (written response on questionnaire)?

Also addressed: Amina’s intention to undertake religious higher education after completing *hifth*

Fatima

1. Why did you say that you think it is “vital” (written response on questionnaire) to complete matric?
2. What kind of “actions and character” (written response on questionnaire) do you think would show others that you are a good Muslim and role model?

3. Do you follow the school's suggested daily timetable (see Appendix 3)?

Also addressed:

- Fatima's intention to complete matric and her aspirations for "secular" or non-religious further education and training, and future employment
- her brother's and a friend's advice about undertaking *hifth*
- her own perception of her progress in *hifth* thus far, as well as her recent assessment in the examinations

Zainab

1. What do you imagine or hope the outcome of completing *hifth* will be?
 - unpack the statement "the outcome [of *hifth*] is amazing" (written response on questionnaire)
2. Why did you say that you "would advise a *hifth* student to go back to mainstream" (written response on questionnaire) although you are not intending to return to mainstream yourself?
 - probe the ambivalence about returning to mainstream schooling and completing matric
3. How do you hope to be "a role model for younger children" (written response on questionnaire)?

Also addressed:

- Zainab's intention to undertake religious higher education after completing *hifth*
- her aspirations regarding "secular" or non-religious further education and training, and future employment

Second session (31/07/12)

Fatima

1. In what ways do you think that this school is "strict" (response given in first interview)?
 - prompt to provide examples of school rules
2. In what ways is your teacher "very helpful" (response given in first interview) to you?
 - prompt to describe how her teacher supports her in her learning
3. What kind of thinking and learning would you say that you do here? How does that compare to what you were expected to do last year at mainstream school?

- unpack the assertion that “a lot of people think that *hifth* is like so easy, but it’s not because you’re using your brain the *whole* time” (response given in first interview)

Fatima was also:

- prompted to reflect on what undertaking *hifth* means in the broader Muslim community, and
- asked to elaborate on her own and her brother’s roles and responsibilities at home.

Zainab

1. In what ways does your sister motivate you in your *hifth*? When do you need her motivation?
 - prompt to describe how her sister supports her in her learning
2. In what ways do you hope to be a role model as a teacher one day?
3. Do you think that in the future you might regret that

Zainab was also:

- prompted for examples of specific difficulties identified in *hifth*, and
- asked to elaborate on her interest in Montessori education.

Third session (14/08/12)

Amina

1. How do you think that undertaking *hifth* has already changed you? How do you hope that it will?
 - unpack the statement that “the Qur’an changes you” (response given in first interview)
2. What does having “a good character” (response given in first interview) mean to you?
 - prompt reflection on what having a “good” character and undertaking *hifth* means to friends and family in the broader Muslim community

Amina was also:

- asked to elaborate on reading the Qur’an in English, and
- prompted to elaborate on being a role model to other Muslims and non-Muslims.

Zainab

1. Do you think that undertaking *hifth* has changed you? If so, in what ways?
 - prompt to reflect on the personal transformation already perceived or hoped for in undertaking *hifth*

Appendix 11: Group interview questions

First group interview, 21/08/12

1. When we were talking about why she had chosen to attend the English and Maths lessons offered by the school, Fatima said that she thought attending these lessons “empowers” herself (Individual interview, 14/08/12). How do you think the mainstream curriculum (English and Maths lessons) offered at the school might empower you?
 - unpack the meaning of “empower”
2. Do you think that *hifth* empowers you? If so, in what ways?
3. Discussion around an article written by a graduate of the boys’ school in the school’s brochure in which he asserts that “learning the Quran [completing *hifth*] has made it much easier for me when I return to school and now university”.
 - probe the meaning of the metaphor/expression that *hifth* “opens your mind”
 - prompt further discussion of *hifth* as disciplined practice
4. What does the word *bacha* mean? In which language is it?
5. What kind of learner do you think is successful at *hifth*? What kind of learner is successful at the mainstream curriculum (English and Maths lessons) offered at the school?
6. What are the classroom rules in your specific classrooms? How do you know what these are if they are not displayed in the classroom?

Second group interview, 27/08/12

1. Brief elaboration of school and classroom rules, including participants’ identification of the most important rules at school.
2. One of my impressions thus far is that *hifth* is difficult. Do you enjoy your *hifth* lessons? Is it important that you enjoy your lessons?
 - unpack the meaning of “enjoy”, as well as “difficult” and “easy”
3. When we were talking about what it means to be a role model, Amina said that she always felt under pressure (from Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours, Muslim friends’ parents, etc.) to be “close to perfect” (Individual interview, 14/08/12). Do you feel the same kind of pressure in the classroom?
 - probe how participants manage stress

4. Are you aware of how your classmates are progressing and how your progress compares to theirs?
 - unpack meaning of “competition” and competitiveness
5. Another of my impressions thus far is that the *hifh* teachers are encouraging, but they do not praise students as often as the English and Maths teachers do. While I was observing, the English and Maths teachers used comments, such as “Clever girl!”, “Good girl!”, “Lovely and “Excellent” (Field notes, 2/06/12, 21/07/12). One of the *hifh* teachers said, “Relax”, “Don’t be nervous” and “If you make a few mistakes, it’s okay” (Field notes, 19/06/12, 20/06/12).
 - prompt further discussion around motivation

Third group interview, 28/08/12

1. Students do very little writing in all of their lessons, including Islamic Studies and English. Would you like to do more writing at school?
 - prompt further discussion of why there is little writing practice at school
 - prompt discussion around participation in English lessons
2. In the first book on *tajweed*, the author explains “Manners when reading the Qur’an” (“Manners of the Heart” and “External Manners”). Do you or your teachers monitor these? If so, in what ways? Are these assessed by your teachers?
 - probe how “presence of the heart” might be monitored by participants themselves or teachers (or assumed by teachers)
 - probe reciting with *tajweed* in a range of settings, such as participants’ homes
3. In today’s world, there are many different ways to read or listen to the Qur’an. The Qur’an is available in many different forms, such as the “translation Qur’an” that Amina showed me (Individual interview, 14/08/12), and the Qur’an in Arabic or English on the Internet. Do you respond to them differently? Does one form seem more authentic or meaningful than the others? Do you respect one form more than the others?
 - brief discussion of how the Qur’an is accessible on a range of electronic devices, such as cell phones and tablet computers
 - probe moral questions about listening to audio recordings of the recited Qur’an on a cell phone

4. What are your hopes for the future? (At which school or college do you think you might matriculate? Which course might you study thereafter? Etc.) Do you imagine or hope that you will recite in public (for a group of people) in the future?
- probe participants' reluctance to recite in public or for an audience, including before the principal, at a local *hifth* competition and during Ramadan

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